

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
REVIEW OF ALLEGATIONS CONCERNING
OPERATION TAILWIND

JULY 21, 1998



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I. INTRODUCTION

On June 7, 1998, the Cable News Network (CNN) aired a story entitled "Valley of Death" on the program *NewsStand*. The story alleged that in September of 1970, U.S. Special Forces and indigenous troops were inserted into Laos to locate and kill U.S. military defectors in what was named OPERATION TAILWIND. The story further alleged that the four-day operation destroyed a village, and killed U.S. defectors, enemy troops, and women and children. Finally, the story alleged that U.S. aircraft dropped lethal Sarin gas to suppress enemy fire while friendly forces were extracted by helicopter. The broadcast was followed the next day by an article in *Time* Magazine, headlined "Did the U.S. Drop Nerve Gas," repeating the allegations. Tab A.

The Defense Department viewed these allegations with concern. On June 9, 1998, the Secretary of Defense initiated an extensive review to determine if events such as those alleged had occurred in OPERATION TAILWIND. Tab B.

The Secretary directed the Secretaries of the Army, Navy and Air Force, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to interview individuals with personal knowledge of the operation, and to review military records, archives, historical writings and any other appropriate sources. The Secretary also asked the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency to conduct a similar review of relevant agency files and personnel.

II. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A. Purpose of OPERATION TAILWIND

1. The operation was launched as a reconnaissance in force to engage the enemy and to divert enemy attention from OPERATION GAUNTLET, an offensive operation to regain control of terrain in Laos. Tab C.
2. No records or personal recollections were discovered to suggest that targeting U.S. defectors played any part in the operation. (Throughout)

B. Use of Sarin

1. U.S. policy since World War II has prohibited the use of lethal chemical agents, including Sarin, unless first used by the enemy. Tab D.
2. No evidence could be found that the nerve agent Sarin was ever transported to Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand). Tab H; Tab I; Tab M.
3. No evidence could be found that Sarin was used in OPERATION TAILWIND. (Throughout)

4. Unique safeguards are required for the handling of lethal chemical agents by U.S. forces. Such safeguards were not used in association with OPERATION TAILWIND because lethal chemical agents were not employed in Southeast Asia. Tab H.
5. Air Force personnel involved in support of OPERATION TAILWIND said they recalled employing tear gas to suppress enemy fire on the ground during extraction of the SOG forces but did not employ Sarin. Tab H.
6. Relevant North Vietnamese military documents reviewed record no use of lethal chemical agents by U.S. forces at any time during the Vietnam War, but they do record the use of tear gas. Tab E.
7. The high toxicity of Sarin gas is such that, had it been employed as a weapon to facilitate the landing zone extraction of Studies and Observation Group (SOG) forces as has been alleged, it is highly improbable that all 16 U.S. servicemen and all but three Montagnards would have survived the mission alive. Tab O.

C. Use of Tear Gas

1. Tear gas munitions were used by U.S. forces during OPERATION TAILWIND to suppress enemy ground fire while friendly forces were extracted by helicopter. Tab C; Tab H.
2. The tear gas used was designated CS, a more potent version than the CN tear gas used previously in the war. Tab H.
3. The use of tear gas, or Riot Control Agents (RCA) as they were sometimes called, was in accordance with U.S. policy at the time. Tab H; Tab K.
4. The use of tear gas to suppress enemy fire was viewed as successful in the operation. Tab C; Tab F.

D. Defectors

1. Only two U.S. military personnel were known to be defectors during the Vietnam War. Tab C; Tab E.
2. No records suggest that defectors were thought to be in the area of OPERATION TAILWIND at the time of the operation. Tab C; Tab E.
3. No document discovered in this review suggests that defectors were targeted or harmed in OPERATION TAILWIND. Although Lieutenant Van Buskirk claims to have seen a defector (CNN/Time Magazine story), other SOG members dispute this account. Tab C; Tab I.

E. Overall Operation

1. The operation was rated by all echelons in the chain of command as successful in engaging the enemy and in intelligence gathering on the North Vietnamese 559th Transportation Group. Tab K.
2. Friendly casualties were three Montagnards killed, 33 Montagnards wounded, no U.S. servicemen killed in action, and 16 U.S. servicemen (every man on the mission) wounded. Tab K.

3. One Army AH-1G and two Marine Corps CH-53D helicopters were lost to ground fire. Tab J, Tab K.
4. Contemporaneous documents and personal recollections do not support the allegation there were non-combatant (women and children) casualties. Tab C; Tab F; Tab K.

III. CONDUCT OF REVIEW AND SUMMARIES OF REPORTS

A. Methodology

Each of the organizations participating in the review of OPERATION TAILWIND followed a similar approach. They located and reviewed relevant records, archives, unit chronologies and other historical documents. They conducted searches on computer databases. They reviewed press accounts from the time of OPERATION TAILWIND and concerning the storage of chemical agents like Sarin gas. They located and interviewed individuals who participated in OPERATION TAILWIND or who were likely to have first-hand knowledge of facts relevant to this inquiry.

OPERATION TAILWIND was a joint operation that occurred almost 28 years ago. The nature of the operation dictated that four different organizations within the Department of Defense furnish reports related to the operation. The forces that conducted OPERATION TAILWIND on the ground were members of the Army's Studies and Observations Group (SOG), a Special Forces unit, assigned to the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV). Close air support was provided by Air Force and Marine Corps aviation assets. The Marine Corps provided the helicopters that flew OPERATION TAILWIND participants into the Laotian jungle and extracted them four days later. The SOG chain of command for planning and execution of OPERATION TAILWIND was through the Commander, MACV and Commander, U.S. Forces, Pacific, to the Secretary of Defense, with the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) providing the Secretary military staff support. Therefore, separate reports were required from the Army, Navy, and Air Force, as well as from the JCS. The CIA also submitted a report. These reports are appended and summarized below. Tabs H-L.

Each report submitted by participating organizations consists of a summary report to the Secretary of Defense with supporting tabular attachments. In addition, in an effort to complement the reviews of the Service Secretaries and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness conducted interviews and gathered information from OPERATION TAILWIND participants. A complete list of interviewees is included at Tab T, and relevant newsclips on OPERATION TAILWIND are found at Tab N.

B. Communications to the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) in the Review Process

OPERATION TAILWIND was conducted by 16 SOG members, accompanied by approximately 120 Montagnard troops. These forces were inserted by air into the Southern Laotian panhandle. The dual purposes of the mission were to conduct a reconnaissance-in-force—an offensive operation to contact the enemy—and to create a diversion so that North

Vietnamese forces pressuring friendly forces conducting OPERATION GAUNTLET elsewhere in Laos would be drawn away.

OPERATION GAUNTLET lasted approximately three weeks (September 3-23, 1970). Its objectives were to harass and interdict enemy lines of communication in southern Laos and to clear the eastern rim of the Bolovens Plateau. The operation involved approximately 5,000 irregular troops, with half of them moving against the Bolovens, while the other half operated in the central Laos panhandle. They initially met stiff resistance but were ultimately able to succeed, probably because some enemy forces were diverted by OPERATION TAILWIND. Enemy activity there remained low during October 1970 due to tropical storms, U.S. air strikes, and OPERATION GAUNTLET. Tab K.

OPERATION TAILWIND was unprecedented because of the large size of the force conducting the operation and because of the depth of the penetration into Laotian territory. As a result, the senior MACV leadership was aware of its conduct and was briefed on its outcome.

To gain an accurate understanding of what actually occurred during the conduct of OPERATION TAILWIND, the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) (USD(P&R)) invited key individuals involved in the planning and execution of the operation to the Pentagon on June 23, 1998, to recount their experiences. Key invitees included, among others, Major General John Singlaub, USA (Ret.) (former SOG Commander); Colonel John Sadler, USA (Ret.) (SOG Commander during OPERATION TAILWIND); Colonel Robert Pinkerton, USA (Ret.) (SOG Operations Officer and principal unit planner for OPERATION TAILWIND); Lieutenant Colonel Eugene McCarley, USA (Ret.) (Company Commander and senior officer on the ground during OPERATION TAILWIND); and Captain Michael Rose, USA (Ret.) (Company medic for OPERATION TAILWIND). A Memorandum for the Record summarizing the discussions at the meeting is at Tab C, along with supporting documents provided by the invitees.

Comments made by participants in the meeting provided useful context for understanding the systemic and extensive reviews comprising the Department's inquiry.

Colonel Sadler, the SOG Commander, described his role in OPERATION TAILWIND—"The buck should start and stop here [with me]. I was responsible for planning it [OPERATION TAILWIND], getting it approved, and directing it." He described the purpose of OPERATION TAILWIND as 1) to "help relieve pressure on the task force coming down from the North—it was a beehive there"; and 2) in the area of Chavane [Laos] "we knew there was something in there in force. We had to go see why the area was so important to the enemy."

With respect to the allegation contained in the CNN/Time Magazine story that women and children in a village were killed by the SOG forces, Captain Michael Rose, the medic on OPERATION TAILWIND, made the following comments:

It wasn't a village we went into as CNN said. It was a compound. I came up after the fight was over. I only saw two bodies, both dead from small arms fire, and I've seen enough dead people from small arms fire to know what that looks like.

Lieutenant Colonel (then Captain) Eugene McCarley, field commander of OPERATION TAILWIND, explained that riot control agent or tear gas was used to keep the enemy from overrunning the position of the American forces:

The FAC [forward air controller] advised me the gas was coming in. He could see the NVA [North Vietnamese Army] massing. We were almost out of ammo. We were exhausted. He could see that once we got to the extraction zone, we would be overrun. The FAC called for the gas. I never requested it.

Captain Rose vividly recounted the final hours of the mission as the SOG force moved to the evacuation point:

We got hit with gas. It was CS [tear gas]. I know what CS is from basic training. It's like skunk. Once you smell it, you never forget, even if it's fifty years later. It was definitely tear gas. I was wincing, my eyes watered, my nose and lungs burned. You turn your face into the wind and it clears. My wounded were in distress. I never saw any evidence of nerve gas. It was CS! It's criminal to say our own Air Force would drop nerve gas on us!

Captain Rose later added: "I'm living proof that toxic gas was not dropped on us that day. Nobody showed any signs of exposure to toxic gas."

As to the presence of defectors during OPERATION TAILWIND, Colonel Pinkerton explained: "I never heard in the year I was SOG operations officer any reference to defectors." Colonel Sadler added: "Another reason the defector story doesn't pass muster is that it was a standing imperative that if you saw POWs, that [POW rescue] became your mission, regardless of what mission you were on." Lieutenant Colonel McCarley added: "There was no mention whatsoever in the debrief of [Caucasians] or nerve gas."

In the eyes of the participants, OPERATION TAILWIND was also a success. Colonel Sadler commented that the operation succeeded in gathering exceptionally good intelligence about the enemy. "The two footlockers of documents we got, [General Creighton] Abrams described as 'the best logistics intelligence ever gained in the Vietnam War.' "

Following the June 23rd briefing, former First Lieutenant Robert Van Buskirk, USA, was interviewed. Mr. Van Buskirk was a member of the SOG unit on the ground during the four-day operation and a central figure and information resource for the *NewsStand* broadcast and *Time* magazine article. He declined to orally answer specific questions about the use of Sarin gas and the presence of defectors on OPERATION TAILWIND but provided background information on other aspects of the mission. Mr. Van Buskirk volunteered that on September 14, 1970, when gas was dropped on the SOG troops before their extraction

from the landing zone, he saw his fellow soldiers "convulsing". However, he did not know that new, larger tear gas munitions (CBU-30) had been introduced for use in Vietnam in 1970, replacing CBU-19, with which he was familiar. He said "whatever it was, it worked. Whatever was on the LZ got us out alive." A memorandum summarizing his oral comments and his written responses to questions are attached at Tab G. Individuals who claimed to have participated in OPERATION TAILWIND but who were later determined not to have done so were not interviewed. In particular, Jay Graves and Jim Cathy were not interviewed, although Mr. Graves submitted a statement denying participation in OPERATION TAILWIND. Tab P.

Doctor Frederick R. Sidell, an authority on Sarin gas and former Chief of the Casualty Care Office, U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense, was interviewed. He explained that Sarin is highly toxic to humans and can be absorbed through the skin or inhaled, although the effects are most immediate and pronounced upon inhalation. Unprotected exposure for one minute to a concentration of 100 milligrams of Sarin per cubic meter will kill 50 percent of the people who inhale it. Protective gas masks and rubber suits are employed by those working with Sarin to avoid exposure. Sarin may be employed as an effective lethal weapon. Lethality when used as a weapon depends on a variety of factors, such as size of the weapon, whether the Sarin is dispersed as vapor or liquid, ambient environment (temperature, wind and humidity), and whether those exposed have protective clothing or gas masks. Tab O.

Exposure to Sarin produces no burning sensation but causes miosis, or contraction of the pupil, which may last for days or even weeks. Exposure also produces a runny nose (but not burning), excessive salivation, secretions in the airways and extreme shortness of breath. If a sufficient amount of Sarin is inhaled, a person would become unconscious, go into convulsions, experience muscle twitching and then become flacid. Death may occur in 10 minutes. Tab O.

Doctor Sidell explained that the compounds CS and CN are classified as riot control agents and commonly known as tear gas. Although similar in effect, they are different compounds chemically. CS is the more potent agent. Exposure to riot control agents causes burning eyes, tearing, a burning and runny nose, a burning sensation in the mouth, salivation and a burning sensation on exposed skin. Coughing and retching may occur but convulsions of the sort associated with exposure to Sarin do not generally occur. Riot control agents are not employed as lethal weapons. Tab O.

Additionally, USD(P&R) staff conducted reviews of documents provided by the invitees that described or referenced OPERATION TAILWIND and that were created shortly after the actual operation. Documents examined include Lieutenant Van Buskirk's briefing summary for General Creighton Abrams, then Commander, MACV, newspaper reports, award citations, military operational maps, military histories, photographs and other information furnished by OPERATION TAILWIND participants. Tab C.

The briefing script used by Lieutenant Van Buskirk to brief General Abrams following OPERATION TAILWIND provides a realistic sense of how the operation was

conducted when the enemy base camp was encountered. Tab F. When attacked by enemy forces for the first time, the SOG forces concluded that the enemy was trying to protect a valuable location and initiated an attack.

Some of the enemy returned fire and others broke and ran. The two squads killed those remaining and drove many into a bn (battalion) size base camp. The assault continued and the enemy broke into three directions. The reserve squad engaged those that were fleeing in their direction. Due to the canopy thinning out, the base camp was marked with a white phosphorus grenade and TAC air was brought to bear on the enemy soldiers fleeing to the front and the right flank. The enemy who remained in the center of the base camp took up positions in huts which were assaulted and destroyed. The first platoon killed a confirmed 54 enemy in huts, bunkers and spider holes, and the 2nd platoon killed 17 enemy on the left flank. TAC air killed an estimated 25 fleeing enemy soldiers. After the base camp was secured, photographs were taken and many valuable intelligence documents were gathered and all livestock was killed.

The information and documents revealed no evidence that the operation targeted U.S. defectors or that Sarin gas was used at any time.

C. Summaries of Reports Received From the Service Secretaries, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Director, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)

1. Report of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (Tab K)

The review conducted by the Joint Staff included participation from U.S. Pacific Command, U.S. Special Operations Command, and the Defense Intelligence Agency. In addition, all Joint Staff directorates, the Joint Staff Information Management Division, and the Chairman's Legal and Public Affairs offices were consulted. An estimated 350 Joint Staff man-hours were expended conducting this review. The Joint Staff review of current and historical files found no evidence to support allegations that OPERATION TAILWIND was directed against U.S. defectors, or that Sarin gas was used during the operation.

In addition, the Joint History Office interviewed Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, USN (Ret.) and General John W. Vogt, USAF (Ret.), who were the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff and Director, Joint Staff, respectively, during OPERATION TAILWIND. Admiral Moorer said that he "never confirmed anything" to the CNN reporters because he could not remember anything about OPERATION TAILWIND. He reported that he had no knowledge of the use of Sarin or the targeting of defectors, and he felt that April Oliver had asked him "trick" questions. General Vogt said that he had no memory of anything "remotely resembling" the use of Sarin gas or the killing of American defectors. He said that he found the CNN story "absolutely unbelievable" and categorically denied ever having received or issued such instructions. Thus, neither Admiral Moorer nor General Vogt believes that Sarin gas was used during OPERATION TAILWIND or that defectors were targeted or sighted during the operation.

2. Report of the Secretary of the Air Force (Tab H)

The Air Force report addressed the allegation that Air Force A-1 "Skyraider" aircraft dropped Sarin gas during the operation. Approximately 1500 man-hours were expended in conducting the Air Force review. The review included interviews with pilots and other individuals with firsthand knowledge of the operation. Among those interviewed were General Michael Dugan, USAF (Ret.), former Chief of Staff of the Air Force and former A-1 pilot; three A-1 pilots from the 56th Special Operations Wing (SOW) (located at Nakhon Phanom (NKP) Air Base, Thailand) who flew close air support and tear gas sorties on September 14, 1970, in support of OPERATION TAILWIND; three forward air controller (FAC) pilots who flew in support of the operation; and former members of the 56th SOW's munitions maintenance squadron during September 1970. The A-1 pilots and FAC pilots independently confirmed the use of tear gas on OPERATION TAILWIND. One of the A-1 pilots, retired Major Arthur Bishop, made a diary entry that the munitions his plane dropped on September 14, 1970, were CBU-30, tear gas cluster bomb units (CBU).

In addition to interviews, a search for relevant materials was conducted by the Office of the Air Force Historian, Air Force History Support Office, Air Force Historical Research Agency, and Air Force Material Command. The Air Force report concludes that on September 13 and 14, 1970, two A-1s from the 56th SOW dropped CBU-30 CS tear gas munitions in an effort to assist in the extraction of a SOG unit that was under attack in Laos. While the September 13 attempt was aborted because of inclement weather, the September 14 effort succeeded. Based on a review of the Air Force's records, no evidence was found that CBU-15 nerve agent munition (Sarin gas) was deployed to Southeast Asia at any time. Sarin gas was not used by Air Force aircraft during OPERATION TAILWIND.

The Air Force report also clarifies confusion in news accounts about the letter-numeric designations associated with various kinds of tear gas and anti-personnel weapons delivered from aircraft during the Vietnam War in general, and during OPERATION TAILWIND in particular. In brief, tear gas was a riot control agent approved for use in Vietnam by Defense Secretary Robert McNamara on January 20, 1968. Tear gas munitions consisted of CBU that were attached to the wings of aircraft and dropped from a relatively low altitude (usually less than 600 feet above ground level) in an effort to incapacitate troops on the ground or to suppress ground fire toward U.S. aircraft.

The actual chemical agent contained in the canisters that comprised the cluster bombs was called CS. In the Air Force, CS had replaced the older, less potent CN tear gas. CN was defined as a "standard tear agent employed by law enforcement agencies", and CS was defined as "an improved agent developed for military use." At the time of OPERATION TAILWIND, CS was the tear agent in use.

Two types of cluster bomb delivery systems were employed at the time of OPERATION TAILWIND. The CBU-19 chemical cluster was a 130-pound Army dispenser intended for use from helicopters. Each dispenser consisted of two subclusters fitted to a strongback. Each subcluster contained 528 CS-filled canisters. CBU-19 gas bombs contained a total of 14 pounds of tear gas. They were infrequently used after 1969 and were

not used during OPERATION TAILWIND. The other cluster bomb delivery system, CBU-30, consisted of a downward ejection dispenser and 1,280 submunitions, each filled with CS. The CBU-30 contained a total of 66 pounds of tear gas. It was this system that was used by the A-1 aircraft to drop tear gas on September 14, 1970 in support of OPERATION TAILWIND.

There were two other cluster bomb weapons in the inventory of the 56th SOW at the time of OPERATION TAILWIND: CBU-14 and CBU-25. CBU-14 was designed for use against light materiel targets such as trucks, while CBU-25 was an anti-personnel weapon. Neither was a chemical munition.

In support of the contention that Sarin gas was used during OPERATION TAILWIND, the producers of the CNN story cite an October 8, 1970, letter from General Lucius D. Clay, Jr., Commander of the Seventh Air Force to Colonel Larry M. Killpack, Commander of the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing, commending the performance of the men of that wing in the achievements of OPERATION TAILWIND. The letter quotes from a briefing given to General Abrams on the operation and includes a one-page series of excerpts from that briefing as an attachment. Tab Q. The final excerpt notes that "Although not set forth in the formal presentation, comments from men on the ground attest to the accurate and effective delivery of CBU- 5 'every time it was brought in.' " The space before the number 5 is illegible. If the number that fits in the space is a one (1), the reference to CBU-15 would imply that Sarin gas was used. If the number is a two (2), then the reference CBU-25 means that conventional anti-personnel cluster bombs were used. The CNN producers apparently construed the ordnance designation to be CBU-15.

Comparison of the briefing excerpts attached to the General Clay's letter (Tab Q) with the briefing script used by Lieutenant Van Buskirk to brief General Abrams (Tab F) makes clear that the excerpts appended to the Clay letter are taken directly from the Van Buskirk briefing script. For example, the excerpted sentence "The TAC Air was successful on the 1st enemy squad and killed approximately half of the other squad" appears word-for-word on lines 20-22 of page four of the Van Buskirk script, and virtually all the other excerpts are direct quotes from the script as well. Of significance is that the Van Buskirk briefing script contains three references to the use of the conventional anti-personnel munition CBU-25—on the next-to-last line on page two; on the fifth line from the bottom of page four; and the seventh line from the top on page five. There is no mention of the use of CBU-15 in the Van Buskirk script. Moreover, the fact that CBU-25 is mentioned three is consistent with the phrase "every time it was brought in." Since General Clay was quoting the briefing script, and since the briefing script mentions CBU-25 three times but does not mention CBU-15 at all, it seems more reasonable to conclude that the illegible digit is "2" rather than a "1" and that the reference was to CBU-25.

Finally, interviews with Air Force munitions maintenance personnel assigned to the 56th SOW during the operation make clear that no Sarin gas (known as GB) (CBU-15) was in the weapons inventory of that unit. Lieutenant Colonel (then Captain) Paul C. Spencer was assigned to the 456th Munitions Maintenance Squadron at the time of OPERATION TAILWIND as assistant maintenance supervisor. At that time he was a graduate of the

Technical Escort School at Ft. McClellan, Alabama, where military personnel were trained in the proper procedures for identifying and handling all types of munitions. In addition, in 1969 Lieutenant Colonel Spencer had been assigned to the 400th Munitions Maintenance Squadron on Okinawa, where Sarin gas was stored. He was thus quite familiar with Sarin weapons and stated that he never saw any at NKP. Moreover, at no time during his tenure there did he see any masks, rubber aprons or other protective items either being used or in the storage areas on base. If Sarin gas were present at NKP, he would have been aware of it. "If I saw it, I would have known it," he said.

Lieutenant Colonel Wilfred N. Turcotte commanded the 456th Munitions Maintenance Squadron during OPERATION TAILWIND. He had no knowledge of nerve gas being used anywhere in the theater, not even to test it. As commander of the group that handled the munitions, he would have been notified if Sarin gas was going to be used on a mission. He would have been aware of the presence of nerve gas, and special precautions would have been necessary. He was on the flightline many times, and the only special equipment he could remember his men wearing were earplugs. Munitions crews who loaded the weapons onto the A-1 aircraft often worked "stripped to the waist." He said the 56th Special Operations Wing's weapons were conventional, not chemical.

Colonel Donald L. Knight, who took command of the 456th Munitions Maintenance Squadron on September 23, 1970, was also interviewed. He heard nothing about Sarin gas being used by the Wing's aircraft in support of any operation. To the best of his knowledge, no nerve agents were at NKP during the time he was stationed there. He indicated that the squadron had "CBU-19As" and "CBU-30As" in its inventory but categorically stated that: "Our A-1s did not have nerve gas bombs."

The Air Force records indicate that Sarin gas was not located at Nahkon Phanom, the airbase in Thailand from which the A-1 aircraft operated. Moreover, Air Force maintenance personnel interviewed who were at that base believe that no Sarin gas was located there during OPERATION TAILWIND.

3. Report of the Secretary of the Army (Tab I)

The Army's review was the most complex and extensive of the Services and was divided into three specific research efforts. In all, the Army expended over 1700 man-hours researching allegations related to OPERATION TAILWIND.

First, a search was made for Army documents within the National Archives' Washington National Record Center and within all Army organizations that could be expected to be aware of, or involved in, the alleged use of Sarin gas during OPERATION TAILWIND. This effort included extensive database searches and record reviews from 18 different Army commands and organizations. No documents were found to indicate the Army facilitated or supported in any manner the use of Sarin gas during OPERATION TAILWIND. Four Army organizations reported information pertaining to Sarin gas (the Army Test and Evaluation Command, the Army Materiel Command, the Army Industrial Operations Command, and the Rocky Mountain Arsenal), but none of this information

related to OPERATION TAILWIND. Instead, the information related to inventories and data bases about the transportation, transfer and storage of Sarin.

Second, the Army's Center for Military History conducted telephone interviews of six former service members who participated in OPERATION TAILWIND—Master Sergeant Morris N. Adair, Sergeant First Class Denver G. Minton, Sergeant Michael E. Hagen, Sergeant Craig Schmidt, Warrant Officer William D. Watson, and Sergeant David L. Young. None had any knowledge of Sarin gas being used at any time, although Sergeant Hagen and Sergeant Schmidt recalled that the gas used on OPERATION TAILWIND seemed stronger than regular tear gas. Sergeant Schmidt reported that SOG teams were routinely briefed to be on the lookout for Russian advisors to the North Vietnamese, although he saw no Caucasians during OPERATION TAILWIND. Sergeant Hagen was the only person who reported seeing any Caucasians. He claims that when the SOG forces entered the base camp, he saw "a blond haired guy, two Chinese, and at least one Russian." He believes the "blond guy" went down a "spider hole" and was blown up by Lieutenant Van Buskirk.

Third, the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics tasked the Army Materiel Command (AMC), the command responsible for control of chemical weapons, to answer specific questions about the quantity, form, storage location, and custody of Sarin gas during the requisite period of OPERATION TAILWIND. Because these questions are central to one of the principal allegations regarding the conduct of OPERATION TAILWIND, the results of this review are summarized separately below.

4. The Army's Findings on the Location and Storage of Sarin Gas During the 1970 Time Period

During the time of OPERATION TAILWIND, the Army stored Sarin munitions and bulk at four sites in the continental United States—Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland; Pine Bluff Arsenal, Arkansas; Rocky Mountain Arsenal, Colorado; and Fort McClellan, Alabama. In addition, Sarin munitions were stored at two overseas locations—one in Clausen, Germany and one on the island of Okinawa. The Sarin was stored in bulk and in various munition forms, such as artillery projectiles, rocket warheads and bombs. All chemical munitions were removed from Okinawa in 1971, prior to the island's reversion to the government of Japan in 1972.

During the time of OPERATION TAILWIND, custody and control of Sarin stored in the United States was managed by AMC. Sarin stored at overseas locations was managed by the Theater Commander. Authority to issue lethal chemical agents like Sarin from storage resided with the Theater Commander, once the National Command Authority (NCA) granted approval. In the case of U.S.-stockpiled Sarin during the time of OPERATION TAILWIND, Army records yield no evidence that lethal chemical agents of any kind, including Sarin, were released for use from any U.S. owned sites during the Vietnam War.

Similarly, there is no record of any action by the NCA that would have permitted the use of Sarin gas during the Vietnam War. Melvin R. Laird, Secretary of Defense from 1969-1973, stated in his interview: "The allegations are ridiculous. I met with Admiral Moorer on

a daily basis at about 4:30 to discuss operations in Vietnam. I have no recollection of him ever speaking to me about authorizing the use of Sarin. I would have had to approve such action." Tab M.

5. Memorandum of the Defense Prisoner of War and Missing Personnel Affairs Office (Tab E)

A. American Defectors and Foreign Advisors with the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) Forces in the "OPERATION TAILWIND" Area of Operations

The Defense Prisoner of War and Missing Personnel Affairs Office provided information pertinent to the aspect of the CNN/Time Magazine story that American defectors or Caucasians were sighted in Laos during OPERATION TAILWIND. Only two American servicemen are known to have defected to Communist forces during the Vietnam War -- Private McKinley Nolan, USA, and Private Robert Garwood, USMC. A "defector" is defined as one who has joined the ranks of and lived with the enemy. Available information indicates that neither person was in the area of operations for OPERATION TAILWIND.

Private Nolan was dropped from the rolls and declared a deserter when he failed to return to his unit after he was released from the Long Binh Military Stockade on November 8, 1967. Taking along his common-law Vietnamese-Khmer wife and two children, he defected to the Communist National Liberation Front (NLF). He resided with Communist forces at various locations along both sides of the border between Cambodia and the northern Tay Ninh Province, South Vietnam, until approximately 1973. It is believed that Khmer Rouge forces killed him between 1974-1975.

Private Garwood disappeared from his unit near Danang City, South Vietnam, on September 28, 1965. American survivors of the communist Military Region 5 POW Camp, located in north western Quang Ngai Province, South Vietnam, reported that Private Garwood lived with the camp cadre, not with the other POWs. In the autumn of 1969, Private Garwood moved to North Vietnam where he lived until he returned to the United States in 1979 and was court-martialed for collaborating with the enemy.

The CNN broadcast and Time Magazine story raised questions whether Russian or other Soviet-Bloc advisors might have been working with PAVN forces in the OPERATION TAILWIND area of operations and whether the SOG forces might have mistaken them for American defectors. Aside from Sergeant Hagen's recollection reported above, the Department's inquiry found no evidence that Russian or other Soviet-Bloc advisors served with the communist PAVN forces in the OPERATION TAILWIND area of operations. Available information about the PAVN's operations suggests that Russian and other Soviet Bloc advisors did not operate in that area. The preponderance of information available from several sources reveals that Soviet military advisors seldom ventured south of the coastal town of Vinh, North Vietnam. Tab E.

B. North Vietnamese Records Concerning Use of Chemical Agents During the Vietnam War

The Defense Prisoner of War and Missing Personnel Affairs Office also reviewed the People's Army of Vietnam's (PAVN) official history of military operations on the Ho Chi Minh Trail; the PAVN's official history of the 968th Volunteer Infantry Division; and, the PAVN's official history of its Chemical Command. Tab E.

Examination of those histories indicated that:

- The official PAVN history of its operations on the Ho Chi Minh Trail makes no mention of the use of any type of chemical weapons by American or allied forces during the war.
- The history of 968th Volunteer Infantry Division, the unit responsible for the defense of the area in which OPERATION TAILWIND took place, does not mention any engagement in September 1970 nor any use of chemical agents by American and allied forces.
- The history of the PAVN Chemical Command mentions American use of only defoliants, incendiary, and CS type chemical weapons in Laos.
- The history of the PAVN Chemical Command describes the PAVN's seizure of American chemical weapons (specifically CS grenades) and equipment (e.g., gas masks) and related documents during Operation Lam Son 719 in early 1971 in Laos as contributing significantly to Hanoi's "political and diplomatic struggle."

Presumably, an event as significant as the use of a lethal chemical weapon like Sarin gas, which could be exploited for propaganda purposes, would have been mentioned in PAVN unit military histories.

6. Report of the Secretary of the Navy (Tab J)

The Marine Corps produced all the information contained in the Department of the Navy (DON) report because no U.S. Navy units were involved in OPERATION TAILWIND. The review required approximately 224 man-hours to complete and entailed an extensive archive search. Information was requested from the offices of the Chief of Naval Operations; Office of Naval Intelligence; Deputy CNO for Plans, Policy and Operations; Deputy CNO for Resources, Warfare Requirements and Assessments; Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet; Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet; Naval Criminal Investigative Service (Counterintelligence Directorate); Navy Judge Advocate General; Naval Special Warfare Command; and the Naval Historical Center. The Marine Corps searched command chronologies, archived documents, and conducted participant interviews.

The DON report shows that Marine Aircraft Group (MAG) 16 provided the helicopters and pilots who flew in support of the operation. Specifically, Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron (HMH) 463 supplied five CH-53D helicopters that were used to insert the SOG forces into the Laotian jungle on September 11, 1970. Helicopters from that

squadron also participated in the aborted extraction attempt on September 13th and in the successful extraction on September 14th. Over the course of the operation, two CH-53D helicopters were shot down. Various other Marine Corps aircraft also flew in support of the mission. There is no evidence in the Marine Corps' records of the use of Sarin gas on OPERATION TAILWIND, or that defectors were targeted or encountered during the operation.

A CH-53 pilot and an AH-1G pilot who flew helicopters in support of the operation independently submitted statements recalling that tear gas was used. Neither recalled the mention in any briefings of any gas other than CS. Both recalled an extremely heavy volume of enemy fire directed at their aircraft during the extraction of SOG forces at the end of the mission. One pilot, quoting a friend, said "If there was nerve gas used, it sure wasn't very effective because somebody down there was shooting and hitting us." The other pilot echoed this sentiment: "Finally, in spite of the 'reported' lethality of the chemical agent allegedly used, the enemy was somehow able to overcome this and was still able to shoot down the last helicopter exiting the zone." Thus, these recollections are inconsistent with the use of Sarin gas.

7. Report of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (Tab L)

At the request of the Department of Defense, the CIA conducted a search for information related to OPERATION TAILWIND. The CIA's review involved several aspects. The operational and analytical directorates searched their automated systems. The CIA history staff and the Office of the Director of Central Intelligence also conducted record searches. Interviews were conducted with several former CIA and government officials familiar with U.S. activities in Laos during the Vietnam War.

In the course of these searches, a number of CIA documents were identified which contained references to OPERATION TAILWIND, but there was no evidence from these documents that Sarin gas was used during the operation or that American deserters were targeted or encountered as a part of the operation. Information from the CIA describes OPERATION TAILWIND as exclusively a military operation, the purposes of which were reconnaissance, monitoring and exploitation activities in Communist-held areas of Laos.

8. Defectors and OPERATION TAILWIND

Interviews conducted by the Army and the USD (P&R) show that only Lieutenant Van Buskirk and Sergeant Hagen claim to have seen other than enemy combatant personnel at the base camp intercepted by SOG forces during OPERATION TAILWIND. First, the after action briefing script used by Lieutenant Van Buskirk to brief General Abrams, the MACV commander (Tab F), does not include any statements about the sighting or killing of Caucasians, Russian advisors, or anyone other than the enemy. That briefing script includes the specific statement "The information I have just presented was obtained by a complete interrogation of every US and SCU (special commando unit, i.e., the Montagnards) member

defectors or Russian advisors had been encountered during the mission, it seems likely that this fact would have been mentioned in the debrief after the mission and presented in the briefing.

A second consideration calling into question Lieutenant Van Buskirk and Sergeant Hagen's version of events is that, in other interviews of six OPERATION TAILWIND participants who were on the ground, no one recounts having targeted or seen defectors as a part of the mission. In fact, one of those participants, Sergeant David L. Young, has a specific recollection to the contrary. Instead of Lieutenant Van Buskirk chasing a "blond-haired guy" down a spider hole, Sergeant Young's written statement to the Army says: "The story as related by Lieutenant Van Buskirk later than afternoon back in Kontum (i.e., after the operation was over) was that the FAC was calling for the camp to be marked. Lieutenant Van Buskirk chased two NVA soldiers into a hole, when they refused to surrender he dropped a W.P. (white phosphorus) grenade into the hole." Tab C; Tab I.

Third, documentary evidence does not appear to support what Lieutenant Van Buskirk and Sergeant Hagen allege. In addition to the Lieutenant Van Buskirk briefing script referenced above, no other documents were located by this inquiry which mention any defectors in connection with OPERATION TAILWIND. Lieutenant Van Buskirk's 1983 book, which in part describes OPERATION TAILWIND, fails to mention encountering blond-haired defectors or Russians, or the use of Sarin gas. Moreover, available unit histories from the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) (Tab E) as discussed previously, do not include evidence of defectors or Russian advisors operating in Laos. There is simply no documentary evidence to substantiate the claim that defectors were sighted during the operation.

Finally, press accounts of interviews of both Lieutenant Van Buskirk and Sergeant Hagen disclose inconsistencies in their stories. For example, Lieutenant Van Buskirk is quoted in a June 7, 1998 Associated Press story as saying that soldiers saw more than a dozen Americans they believed to be defectors. Tab R. In the actual CNN story that prompted this inquiry, 1/Lt Van Buskirk is quoted as saying he saw but two Caucasians. Tab A. Similarly, Sergeant Hagen told the Army for this inquiry that he had seen "a blond-haired guy, two Chinese, and at least one Russian." However, the June 22, 1998 edition of Newsweek Magazine quotes Hagen as saying he saw "a blond guy from a distance." The story contains no reference to any Chinese or Russians. Tab S.

IV. CONCLUSION

Taken together, the comprehensive reviews conducted provide an extensive record of documents and personal recollections about the events comprising OPERATION TAILWIND. This record reveals no evidence that the operation was directed in any manner toward military defectors, nor was any evidence found that Sarin gas was used during the operation at any time.

From the extensive record gathered in these reviews, the Department of Defense concludes that OPERATION TAILWIND 1) was conducted for the stated military purposes; 2) was conducted in accordance with Law of War, Rules of Engagement, and United States policies in force at the time; 3) did not target American defectors; and 4) did not employ Sarin gas.

ATTACHMENTS

April Oliver & Peter Arnett, <i>Did the U.S. Army Drop Nerve Gas?</i> , TIME (June 15, 1998) at 37-9	Tab A
MEMORANDUM FROM SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM COHEN TO SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS AND CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF (June 9, 1998)	Tab B
MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD OF MEETING BETWEEN USD(P&R) AND PARTICIPANTS IN OPERATION TAILWIND (June 23, 1998)	Tab C
MEMORANDUM FOR USD(P&R) FROM DoD GENERAL COUNSEL (July 16, 1998)	Tab D
MEMORANDUM FOR USD(P&R) FROM DEFENSE PRISONER OF WAR/MISSING IN ACTION OFFICE (July 15, 1998)	Tab E
MEMORANDUM SUMMARY PREPARED BY 1 ST LIEUTENANT ROBERT VAN BUSKIRK OF BRIEFING GIVEN TO GENERAL CREIGHTON ABRAMS (Undated)	Tab F
MEMORANDUM SUMMARY OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN ROBERT VAN BUSKIRK AND HENRY J. SCHWEITER (July 14, 1998)	Tab G
DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE, <i>Report On Operation Tailwind</i> (July 7, 1998)	Tab H
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY, <i>Report On Operation Tailwind</i> (July 9, 1998)	Tab I
DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY, <i>Report On Operation Tailwind</i> (July 10, 1998)	Tab J
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, <i>Report On Operation Tailwind</i> (July 7, 1998)	Tab K
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, <i>Report On Operation Tailwind</i> (July 10, 1998)	Tab L
MEMORANDUM SUMMARY OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE HONORABLE MELVIN LAIRD, FORMER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, AND COLONEL THOMAS G. BOWMAN, USMCR (July 14, 1998)	Tab M
NEWS CLIPPINGS ON OPERATION TAILWIND	Tab N

MEMORANDUM SUMMARY OF TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS BETWEEN DR. FREDERICK R. SIDELL AND HENRY J. SCHWEITER, AND CURRICULUM VITAE OF DR. SIDELL	Tab O
STATEMENT OF JAMES (JAY) GRAVES DENYING PARTICIPATION IN OPERATION TAILWIND	Tab P
LETTER, DATED OCT. 8, 1970, FROM GENERAL LUCIUS D. CLAY, JR. TO COLONEL LARRY M. KILLPACK (WITH ATTACHMENT).....	Tab Q
ASSOCIATED PRESS, " <i>Report: U.S. Used Nerve Gas Against Defectors In Vietnam</i> " (June 7, 1998).....	Tab R
Evan Thomas & Gregory L. Vistica, " <i>What's The Truth About Tailwind?</i> ", NEWSWEEK (June 22, 1998)	Tab S
LIST OF INTERVIEWEES	Tab T

A

W O R L D



MIKE HAGEN

"We basically destroyed everything there"

CRAIG SCHMIDT

"It doesn't surprise me it was nerve gas"

EUGENE MCCARLEY

The body count was "upwards of 100"

JIMMY LUCAS

"In three days I just cheated death"

DID THE U.S. DROP NERVE GAS?

A CNN investigation charges that the U.S. used gas in 1970 to save troops sent into Laos to kill defectors

By APRIL OLIVER and PETER ARNETT

SEPTEMBER 1970. SIXTY MILES INSIDE Laos, where it was not officially supposed to be, a battered and exhausted U.S. Special Forces commando unit was in very deep trouble. Nearly every one of the Americans and many of the Montagnard mercenaries fighting with them had been wounded. They had just wiped out a village base camp, killing about 100 people that included not only women and children but

also what some believed to be a group of American G.I.s who had defected to the enemy. Now their unit was under assault by a superior force of North Vietnamese and communist Pathet Lao soldiers.

The enemy troops had appeared suddenly on a nearby ridge, and were about to cut off the Americans as they tried to reach a rice paddy where rescue helicopters would land to fly them out of officially neutral Laos, back to their base in Vietnam. "The enemy was coming at us. We were out of ammo," recalls platoon leader Robert Van Buskirk, then a 26-year-old lieutenant. His only recourse was to call for help from the air. He radioed an Air Force controller above to call in two waiting A-1

Skyraiders to drop the "bad of the bad."

Within seconds, the Skyraiders swooped over the advancing enemy and dropped gas canisters, scoring a direct hit. The G.I.s heard the canisters exploding and saw a wet fog envelop the Vietnamese soldiers as they dropped to the ground, vomiting and convulsing. As the rescue choppers lifted his unit off, Van Buskirk manned a machine gun, scanning the elephant grass for targets, but there were none. "All I see is bodies," he recalls. "They are not fighting anymore. They are just lying, some on their sides, some on their backs. They are no longer combatants."

Now, after an eight-month investigation, military officials with knowledge of

APRIL OLIVER is a producer for NewsStand, and PETER ARNETT is a CNN international correspondent

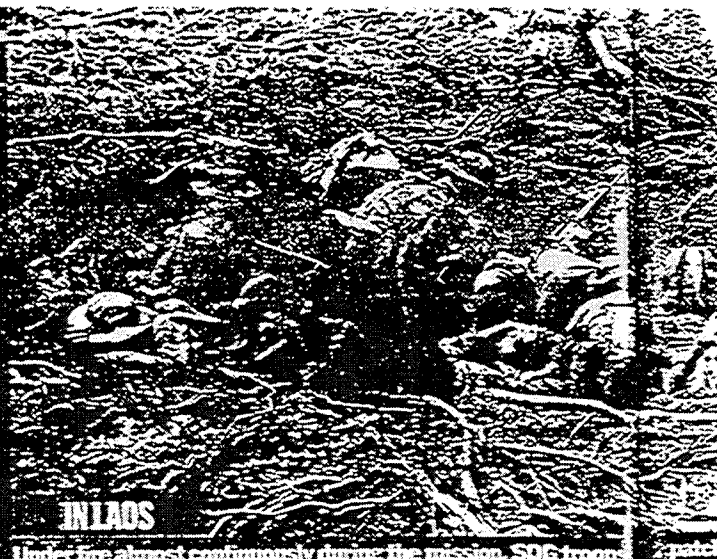
OPERATION TAILWIND

In Sept. 1970 a "hatchet force" was assigned to wipe out a Laotian village suspected of harboring American defectors. The commandos were promised any weapon they might need, including an agent they called "sleeping gas," for "last resort" situations.



SETTING OUT

SOG troops get ready for Operation Tailwind



IN LAOS

Under fire almost continuously during the mission, SOG troops

the mission assert to *NewsStand*: *CNN & TIME* that the gas dropped 28 years ago in Laos was nerve gas, specifically sarin, the lethal agent used in the 1995 terrorist attack in a Tokyo subway that killed a dozen people. Although the nerve gas, called GB by the military, had been in the U.S. arsenal for years and the U.S. had not yet ratified the Geneva Protocol banning its use, the policy of the Nixon Administration was "no first use" of lethal nerve gas in combat.

A Pentagon official has told *NewsStand*: *CNN & TIME* that the Army "has found no documentary evidence to support CNN's claims that nerve gas of any type was used on Operation Tailwind." But Admiral Thomas Moorer, U.S.N. (ret.), Chairman of the Joint Chiefs in 1970, and other top military officials have confirmed the use of sarin in the Laotian operation and in other missions to rescue downed U.S. airmen during the Vietnam War. Moorer argues the use of the gas was justified under the circumstances. Says he: "I would be willing to use any weapon and any tactic to save the lives of American soldiers."

In addition to using the nerve gas to extract the Americans after their raid, though, veteran Special Forces officers claim to *NewsStand*: *CNN & TIME* that sarin was also used the night before the assault to "prepare" the village for the attack the next morning. This would indicate that civilians as well as combatants were victims of poison gas.

Just as surprising as the use of the gas is the reason for the raid: the targeted village was believed to be harboring a large group of American G.I.s who had defected to the enemy. The Special Forces unit's job was to kill them.

Based in Kontum, South Vietnam, the men involved in Operation Tailwind were known as a SOG team, standing innocuously for Studies and Observations Group. Officially, SOG units didn't exist, but they were America's fiercest warriors, conduct-

ing classified "black operations" with unconventional weapons and unusual targets. They did little studying and a lot of fighting. According to SOG veterans, they had no rules of engagement: anything was permissible as long as it was deniable. Their motto, according to Van Buskirk: "Kill them all, and let God sort it out."

During its pre-raid briefing at Kontum, the SOG "hatchet force" was told to kill anyone it encountered. "My orders were, if it's alive, if it breathes oxygen, if it urinates, if it defecates, kill it," says Van Buskirk. In keep-



MISSION ACCOMPLISHED Lieut. Van Buskirk back in Vietnam after Operation Tailwind

ing with the compartmentalization of information necessary to protect top-secret missions, only a few of the SOG officers knew the precise target. And very few knew the exact type of gas available for their mission, although the unit was promised anything in the non-nuclear U.S. arsenal it might need to complete the mission. The commandos understood there was an agent commonly known as "sleeping gas" available for last-resort situations; they were aware that the gas caused respiratory distress, sudden vomiting, diarrhea, convulsions and often death.

The unit leaders were advised to equip their soldiers with bulky but effective M-17 gas masks before the raid.

Several days before the operation began, a small reconnaissance force was dropped into a lush Laotian valley near the town of Chavan. As Jay Graves, a SOG recon team leader, put it: "We went in, snooped and pooped, moved around." Through a special field telescope, Graves' men spotted the prize—several "roundeyes," Americans, in the village. That report was radioed back, and the recon team was told to "groundhog"—remain silent and in hiding until the hatchet force arrived. The sighting of defectors is confirmed today by Air Force "rat-pack" commando Jim Cathey. "I believed that these were American defectors," he says, "because there was no sign of any restraint. They walked around as though they were a part of the bunch."

On Sept. 11 the 16 SOG-team members and about 140 Montagnard tribesmen, who had been hired to fight the communists, were loaded aboard four big Marine helicopters at Dak To, near the border with Laos. The sight of the assault force, which included 12 Cobra helicopter gunships and two backup Marine choppers, alerted Jack Tucker, one of the Marine pilots, that trouble lay ahead. "I saw them walking across the tarmac, loaded down with those grenade clips," he says. "And there were these little bitty Montagnards humping so much stuff. I just went 'Oh, man' and knew we were in for some real deep s---." Tucker and the other pilots had also been equipped with special gas masks to protect against chemical warfare.

As soon as the helicopters approached the landing zone near Chavan, they came under heavy fire. "It was a hairy situation from the time we got there," recalls Jimmy Lucas, a squad leader. "Ground fire on insertion is something you are not supposed to get." The SOG team hit the ground sev-



troops patch their wounds as best they can in the field.



IN THE VILLAGE

A hootch where defectors might have hidden



AIR ATTACK

A Skyraider swoops in during Tailwind

eral miles from the targeted base camp and spent the next three days fighting its way toward it. "I feel like in them three days I just cheated death," says Lucas. "We never expected to come out. I didn't."

On the third night the commandos hunkered down near the village as the Air Force A-1s "prepped" the target. In the morning the SOG forces attacked. Van Buskirk's platoon led the charge. "I went hi diddle diddle, right up the middle. I was on the offensive," he says. Tossing grenades into the hootches in the village and spraying machine-gun fire ahead, the assault force met little resistance. "It was minimal, nothing like you would expect for the amount of people there," says Craig Schmidt, a fighter in Van Buskirk's platoon. "It was very unusual, kind of eerie."

Suddenly Van Buskirk spotted two "longshadows," a name for taller Caucasians. One was sliding down a "spider hole" into the underground-tunnel system beneath the camp. The other was running toward it. "Early 20s. Blond hair. Looks like he was running off a beach in California," remembers Van Buskirk. "Needs a haircut. This is a G.I. Boots on. Not a prisoner. No shackles. Nothing." The lieutenant gave chase but just missed the blond man as he slipped into the tunnel. He shouted down the hole, identifying himself and offering to take the man home. "F___ you," came the reply. "No, it's f___ you," answered Van Buskirk as he dropped in a white phosphorus grenade, presumably killing both longshadows.

The village raid lasted no more than 10 minutes. The body count, according to Captain Eugene McCarley, the officer in charge, was "upwards of 100." Sergeant Mike Hagen says "the majority of the people there were not combat personnel. The few infantry people they had we overran immediately. We basically destroyed everything there." The Montagnards searched

the camp for documents and booty. They reported to Hagen and Van Buskirk that there were "*beaucoup* roundeyes" dead in the hootches. Says Van Buskirk: "A dozen. 15, maybe 20." But the SOG team says no bodies were identified or recovered.

With the camp destroyed, spotter planes overhead ordered the SOG unit to the rice paddy where the rescue helicopters would land. As the enemy closed in, the commandos were told to don their "funny faces," the M-17 gas masks. Then came the explosions of the gas canisters. "To me it was more of a very, very light, light fog. It was tasteless, odorless, you could barely see it," recalls Hagen.

THE GAS SPREAD TOWARD THE AMERICANS even though the downwash of the chopper blades was pushing it away. Some of the gas masks had been damaged in the four-day battle, some had been discarded, and some were too big for the diminutive Montagnards. "Everything got sticky," says squad leader Craig Schmidt. "We turned our sleeves down to cover ourselves as much as possible. It doesn't surprise me in the slightest bit that it was nerve gas. It worked too well." Some of the Americans began vomiting violently. Today Hagen suffers from creeping paralysis in his extremities, which his doctor diagnoses as nerve-gas damage. "Nerve gas," says Hagen, "the government don't want it called that. They want to call it incapacitating agent or some other form. But it was nerve gas."

As many as 60 of the Montagnards died in Operation Tailwind, but all 16 Americans got out alive, although every one of them suffered some wounds. Van Buskirk and McCarley earned the Silver Star for valor. Van Buskirk personally briefed General Creighton Abrams, the top U.S. commander in Vietnam, on the mission. But

when the lieutenant wrote his after-action report, a superior officer, now deceased, advised him to delete the part about dropping the white phosphorus grenade—a "willy pete," in Army lingo—on the American defectors in the tunnel.

Confirming the use of sarin, Moorer says the gas was "by and large available" for high-risk search-and-rescue missions. Sources contacted by *NewsStand*: *CNN* & *TIME* report that GB was employed in more than 20 missions to rescue downed pilots in Laos and North Vietnam. Concludes Moorer: "This is a much bigger operation than you realize."

Melvin Laird, Secretary of Defense at the time of Operation Tailwind, says he has no specific recollection of GB being used, but adds, "I do not dispute what Admiral Moorer has to say on this matter." And the admiral points out that any use of nerve gas would have had approval from the Nixon national-security team in Washington. Henry Kissinger, National Security Adviser at the time, declined to comment.

As for the defectors and the policy of killing them, Major General John Singlaub, U.S.A. (ret.), a former SOG commander, confirms what was the unwritten SOG doctrine in effect at the time: "It may be more important to your survival to kill the defector than to kill the Vietnamese or Russian." The defectors' knowledge of U.S. communications and tactics "can be damaging," he explains.

"There were more defectors than people realize," says a SOG veteran at Fort Bragg. No definitive number of Americans who went over to the enemy is available, but Moorer indicated there were scores. Another SOG veteran put the number at close to 300. The Pentagon told *NewsStand*: *CNN* & *TIME* that there were only two known military defectors during the Vietnam War.

—Additional reporting by Amy Kasarda, associate producer for *NewsStand*, and Jack Smith, senior producer for *NewsStand*



CNN Newsstand Time transcript

Valley of Death; Parents, Kids & Sex; The Looking Glass

Aired June 7, 1998 - 10:00 p.m. ET

JEFF GREENFIELD: EARLIER THIS YEAR, THE UNITED STATES NEARLY WENT TO WAR WITH IRAQ OVER ITS CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS. NOW, CNN & TIME, AFTER AN EIGHT MONTH INVESTIGATION, REPORT THAT THE UNITED STATES MILITARY USED LETHAL NERVE GAS DURING THE VIETNAM WAR.

BERNARD SHAW: IT WAS 1970. PRESIDENT NIXON HAD PLEDGED A NO-FIRST-USE POLICY ON NERVE GAS - PART OF HIS COMMITMENT TO THE GENEVA PROTOCOL LIMITING CHEMICAL WEAPONS USE. THE U.S. HAD SIGNED THE TREATY RESTRICTING CHEMICAL WEAPONS, BUT THE SENATE HAD NOT YET RATIFIED IT.

SHAW: NOW, PETER ARNETT HAS THE STORY OF OPERATION TAILWIND...A RAID INTO LAOS- WHICH, ACCORDING TO MILITARY OFFICIALS WITH KNOWLEDGE OF THE MISSION, HELD TWO TOP SECRETS: DROPPING NERVE GAS ON A MISSION TO KILL AMERICAN DEFECTORS.

GREENFIELD: THE EXCLUSIVE PHOTOS USED THROUGHOUT THIS REPORT WERE PROVIDED BY THE COMMANDOS WHO CARRIED OUT THIS RAID. THEY ARE SEEN HERE FOR THE FIRST TIME.

CORRESPONDENT PETER ARNETT: These are the men of Operation Tailwind.

LT. ROBERT VAN BUSKIRK: OUR MOTTO IN SPECIAL FORCES WAS KILL 'EM ALL, LET GOD SORT IT OUT.

ARNETT: Tailwind voices the U.S. government never wanted you to hear.

MICHAEL HAGEN: NERVE GAS. THE GOVERNMENT DON'T WANT IT CALLED THAT BUT IT WAS NERVE GAS.

ARNETT: Pictures of Tailwind - a black operation so secret, even those who carried it out did not know all the details.



CAPT. EUGENE McCARLEY: WHAT WAS DROPPED FROM THE AIR, THAT WAS A DECISION WAY ABOVE MY LEVEL.

GRAVES: THIS THING HAS BEEN BURIED SO DEEP FOR SO LONG.

ARNETT: Buried 28 years ago during America's secret war in Laos.

VAN BUSKIRK: DEATH. THIS WAS THE VALLEY OF DEATH.

VAN BUSKIRK: How many of you realize that God is a spirit?

ARNETT: Today Robert Van Buskirk is a born again Christian, taking his ministry into prisons...

VAN BUSKIRK: He's goin' to set you free, son...you know that, don't you?

ARNETT: Back in 1970, he was First Lt. Van Buskirk. 1970... President Nixon was Commander in Chief, Henry Kissinger -- National Security Advisor. A time of division and turbulence -- 400,000 troops still in Vietnam. The invasion of Cambodia, protests... in Washington... and throughout the country. And the killing of antiwar students at Kent State University by Ohio National Guardsmen. 1970.... Van Buskirk was a platoon leader on Tailwind with orders to kill everything in sight -- including American defectors.

VAN BUSKIRK: IT WAS PRETTY WELL UNDERSTOOD THAT IF YOU CAME ACROSS A DEFECTOR, AND COULD PROVE IT TO YOURSELF BEYOND A REASONABLE DOUBT, DO IT, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE, KILL THEM. IT WASN'T ABOUT BRINGING THEM BACK, IT WAS TO KILL THEM.

ARNETT: Tailwind -- the largest, deepest raid into Laos by the U.S. military. Leading the so-called hatchet force, Captain Eugene McCarley.

CAPT. EUGENE McCARLEY: WE WOULD GO INTO LAOS, BLOW SOME BRIDGES....DESTROY ANYTHING WE CAME UP ON.

ARNETT: These soldiers were part of SOG -- the Studies and Observations Group --a small, elite unit of Special Forces. SOG commandos carried out "black operations" against unusual targets, using unusual weapons. They fought with no rules...were pledged to secrecy. Everything was deniable. Both McCarley and Van Buskirk told CNN they were promised anything in the U.S. arsenal to complete Tailwind's mission -- anything except nuclear weapons. The arsenal included a special weapon known as "sleeping gas."

VAN BUSKIRK: SLEEPING GAS... WAS A SLANG FOR NERVE GAS. IN OTHER WORDS, WHEN YOU GOT HIT WITH SLEEPING GAS, YOU WERE GOING TO SLEEP FOREVER.

ARNETT: NEWSSTAND: CNN & TIME HAS CONTACTED OVER 200 PEOPLE, FROM CORPORALS TO GENERALS, INCLUDING DOZENS WHO FOUGHT OR FLEW ON THE TAILWIND

MISSION. ACCORDING TO MILITARY OFFICIALS WITH KNOWLEDGE OF THE OPERATION, TAILWIND HELD TWO OF THE US MILITARY'S TOP SECRETS... FIRST. . .THE SLEEPING GAS WAS INDEED NERVE GAS...DEADLY SARIN, WHAT THE MILITARY CALLS "GB." THESE MILITARY SOURCES TOLD CNN THAT DURING TAILWIND NERVE GAS WAS DROPPED ON A VILLAGE BASE CAMP BELIEVED TO HOLD AMERICAN DEFECTORS. AND THEN AGAIN TO GET THE SOG TEAM OUT...THE FIRST CONFIRMED USE OF DEADLY NERVE GAS IN COMBAT BY THE US MILITARY. THE SECOND SECRET... HUNTING AND KILLING AMERICAN DEFECTORS WAS A HIGH PRIORITY ON SOG MISSIONS...INCLUDING TAILWIND.

ARNETT: Jay Graves was a SOG reconnaissance team leader, dropped into Laos several days before the Tailwind commando team. His mission:

GRAVES: TAKE PHOTOS - IF WE COULD, ESTABLISH ID ON PEOPLE WITHOUT GOING IN THE CAMP.

ARNETT: From this position, his recon team spotted several Americans, roundeyes -- either POWs or defectors.

GRAVES: WE SAW SOME ROUNDEYED PEOPLE. WE DON'T KNOW WHETHER THEY'RE PRISONERS OR WHATEVER.

ARNETT: Graves radioed in the sighting. He was told to hide and wait for the hatchet force. Back at the SOG base in Kontum, the Tailwind commandos prepared for their mission. Van Buskirk said an Air Force Colonel privately warned him about the lethal gas.

VAN BUSKIRK: BE SURE YOU TAKE YOUR GAS MASKS. THIS STUFF CAN REALLY HURT YOU. IT CAN KILL YA.

ARNETT: Captain McCarley told CNN off camera the use of nerve gas on Tailwind was, quote "very possible." Later, on camera, he said....

McCARLEY: I NEVER EVER CONSIDERED THE USE OF LETHAL GAS, NOT ON ANY OF MY OPERATIONS.

ARNETT: Nevertheless, McCarley said he equipped all his men with special gas masks -- called M-17s, designed to protect against lethal gas. The SOG commandos were also issued atropine, a nerve gas antidote. McCarley also suggested that lethal gas was always an option.

MCCARLEY: THEY MIGHT HAVE HAD SOME OF THESE OTHER GASES AVAILABLE OR STANDING BY WITH THE AIR FORCE. BUT AS I UNDERSTAND IT, THESE GASES, THESE LETHAL GASES, ARE AN AIR FORCE ORDNANCE, IN THEIR ARSENAL.

ARNETT: CNN has obtained a copy of a 1971 manual of chemical weapons in the U.S. military arsenal. It shows a vast array of nerve gas weapons -- containing the nerve agent GB, more commonly known as sarin. Sarin -- the same lethal nerve gas used three years ago in a terrorist subway attack in Japan.

Admiral Thomas Moorer was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs in 1970. He spoke with CNN producer April Oliver.

APRIL OLIVER: MORALLY, YOU WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTION TO LETHAL GAS BEING USED IF IT PROTECTED AMERICAN INTERESTS?

MOORER: I WOULD BE WILLING TO USE ANY WEAPON AND ANY TACTIC TO SAVE THE LIVES OF AMERICAN SOLDIERS.

ARNETT: Oliver asked Admiral Moorer about a special weapon the military called CBU-15-- a cluster bomb unit that was filled with GB-sarin nerve gas. Moorer confirmed that nerve gas was used in Tailwind.

OLIVER: CBU-15 WAS A TOP SECRET WEAPON?

MOORER: WHEN IT WAS, IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN. PUT IT THAT WAY.

OLIVER: WHAT'S YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF HOW OFTEN IT WAS APPLIED DURING THIS WAR?

MOORER: WELL I DON'T HAVE ANY FIGURES TO TELL YOU HOW MANY TIMES. I NEVER MADE A POINT OF COUNTING THAT UP. I'M SURE YOU CAN FIND OUT FROM THOSE THAT HAVE USED THEM.

OLIVER: SO ISN'T IT FAIR TO SAY THAT TAILWIND PROVED THAT CBU-15, GB, IS AN EFFECTIVE WEAPON?

MOORER: YES, I THINK, BUT I THINK THAT WAS ALREADY KNOWN. OTHERWISE IT WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN MANUFACTURED.

JIM CATHEY: "Cause as far as I'm concerned, the Bible is our way to know Jesus...."

ARNETT: Today Jim Cathey is a Baptist preacher. On Tailwind, he was in charge of Air Force resupply for the SOG commandos. On the ground one day ahead of them, he spent five hours closely observing the village base camp. Through binoculars he spotted 10-15 "longshadows," Caucasians much taller than Laotians and Vietnamese.

CATHEY: I BELIEVE THAT THERE WERE AMERICAN DEFECTORS IN THAT GROUP OF PEOPLE IN THAT VILLAGE. BECAUSE THERE WAS NO, NO SIGN OF ANY KIND OF RESTRAINT. IN RETROSPECT, I BELIEVE THAT MISSION WAS TO WIPE OUT THOSE LONGSHADOWS.

MOORER: I'M SURE THERE WERE SOME DEFECTORS... THERE ARE ALWAYS DEFECTORS.

ARNETT: Admiral Moorer acknowledged in an off-camera interview that Tailwind's target was indeed defectors. While he would give no firm estimate, Moorer indicated scores of U.S. military had defected during the war. Other senior military officials also confirm that

Tailwind's objective was a group of defectors, collaborating with the enemy.

ARNETT: THESE OFFICIALS SAY THE TAILWIND MISSION WAS NOT UNIQUE. FOR SOG, DEFECTORS WERE ALWAYS CONSIDERED A TARGET OF OPPORTUNITY --TO BE ELIMINATED.

ARNETT: Former SOG commander John Singlaub told CNN. "It may be more important to your survival to kill the defector than to kill the Vietnamese or Russian." American defectors' knowledge of communications and tactics, "can be damaging." Singlaub argued it's better to kill defectors than to risk lives trying to capture them.

GREENFIELD: IN A MOMENT, WE'LL RETURN TO PETER ARNETT'S REPORT ON "OPERATION TAILWIND"-HOW IT BEGAN, AND-ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES-HOW NERVE GAS WAS USED, AND HOW AMERICAN DEFECTORS WERE TARGETED.

SHAW: THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT VIETNAM WAS A MILESTONE IN OUR RECENT HISTORY DONE THAT HAUNTS US TO THIS DAY. IT'S A FITTING TOPIC TO BEGIN OUR LOOK AT ONE OF MOST FAMILIAR DEPARTMENTS OF "TIME" MAGAZINE: "MILESTONES."

HAGEN: THEY HAD THROWN UP. THEY WERE IN CONVULSIONS ON THE GROUND. I DON'T THINK TOO MANY OF 'EM GOT UP AND WALKED AWAY.

ARNETT: As the commandos struggled to get out, some of the gas spread across the elephant grass, into the landing zone.

HAGEN: IT WAS TASTELESS, ODORLESS, YOU COULD BARELY SEE IT.

ARNETT: As the choppers descended, their blades helped disperse the drifting gas. Hagen and many commandos were without gas masks, lost or damaged in the fighting. Van Buskirk discarded his.

VAN BUSKIRK: I AM RUNNING, I AM SHOOTING. AND QUICKLY. I AM THROWING UP. I AM UNABLE TO BREATHE.

ARNETT: To reach the choppers, Hagen says some of the commandos had to climb over enemy bodies.

VAN BUSKIRK: I LOOKED DOWN INTO THIS VALLEY. ALL I SEE IS BODIES. THEY ARE NOT FIGHTING ANYMORE. THEY ARE NO LONGER COMBATANTS.

ARNETT: All 16 Americans were wounded but got out alive.

HAGEN: WITHOUT THE GAS, ...WE WOULD NEVER HAVE MADE IT OUT.

ARNETT: As many as 60 Montagnards were killed, nearly all the rest wounded. Hagen has no doubts about what the gas was.

HAGEN: NERVE GAS. THE GOVERNMENT DON'T WANT IT CALLED THAT. THEY WANT TO CALL IT INCAPACITATING AGENT, OR SOME OTHER FORM. BUT IT WAS NERVE GAS.

ARNETT: SOG recon leader Jay Graves agrees.

ARNETT: TELL ME WHAT WAS THE CALL SIGN FOR THE SLEEPING GAS USED ON TAILWIND?

GRAVES: GB, WE STARTED CALLING IT KNOCKOUT GAS, AND THEN IT WAS GB, AND THEN THEY CHANGED IT TO SOMETHING ELSE. WHICH I CAN UNDERSTAND WHY THEY WAS DOING THAT NOW.

ARNETT: WHY WERE THEY DOING IT?

GRAVES: CAUSE THEY WAS USING NERVE GAS IN THAT AND NOT TELLING ANYBODY ABOUT IT.

ARNETT: Even a pilot who dropped gas to get the commandos out said he was briefed it was just tear gas.

ARNETT: But chemical experts CNN consulted said tear gas is not consistent with the enemy's symptoms observed by the SOG team: vomiting, convulsing and falling quickly to the ground unconscious.

AMY SMITHSON: THOSE ARE SYMPTOMS THAT I WOULD ASSOCIATE WITH EXPOSURE TO A NERVE AGENT, NOT EXPOSURE TO SOMETHING LIKE TEAR GAS. WITH TEAR GAS, AN INDIVIDUAL CRIES; WITH NERVE AGENT, THE INDIVIDUAL EXPOSED IS VERY LIKELY TO DIE.

ARNETT: Admiral Moorer has told CNN that GB, sarin nerve gas, was, quote "by and large available" for many other rescue attempts. He also told CNN, quote "this is a much bigger operation than you realize." A1 Skyraider pilots, other SOG veterans, and former senior military officials all tell of GB being dropped on more than 20 missions in Laos and North Vietnam.

ARNETT: QUESTIONS REMAIN - - EXACTLY HOW MANY TIMES HAS THE US MILITARY SECRETLY USED NERVE GAS? ON TAILWIND, JUST WHO WERE THE DEFECTORS KILLED? WERE MILITARY OFFICIALS SURE NO POWS WERE KILLED? JUST HOW MANY DEFECTORS WERE THERE IN LAOS? AND WHO ULTIMATELY AUTHORIZED THE OPERATION?

ARNETT: Admiral Moorer said the Nixon White House national security team had to approve nerve gas use. He also said that the CIA had partial responsibility for Tailwind. Former Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird said that while he had no recollection of GB sarin nerve gas being used, quote, "I do not dispute what Admiral Moorer has to say on this matter." And Admiral Moorer told CNN he is speaking out now because of his respect for history.

ARNETT: Tailwind -- cited by military officials who confirm the use of nerve gas in combat by the United States on a hunt/kill raid for

American defectors. A top secret battle in a valley of death.

GREENFIELD: CNN SUBMITTED A FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUEST ON OPERATION TAILWIND TO THE PENTAGON SEVEN MONTHS AGO. AS OF NOW, WE'VE HAD NO RESPONSE TO THAT REQUEST. THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, GENERAL HENRY SHELTON, DECLINED OUR REQUEST FOR AN ON-CAMERA INTERVIEW-SO DID SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM COHEN. ON FRIDAY, THE PENTAGON TOLD CNN AND TIME THAT THE ARMY "HAS FOUND NO DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT CNN'S CLAIMS THAT NERVE GAS OF ANY TYPE WAS USED IN OPERATION TAILWIND." THE PENTAGON ALSO SAID THAT "DURING THE WAR, THERE WERE ONLY TWO KNOWN MILITARY DEFECTORS." TODAY-DESPITE A NEW INTERNATIONAL TREATY RESTRICTING CHEMICAL WEAPONS, MORE THAN 13 MILLION POUNDS OF THE NERVE GAS SARIN REMAIN IN THE U.S. STOCKPILE.

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

JUN 9 1998

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

SUBJECT: Allegations Regarding "Operation Tailwind"

Allegations have been made that in the early 1970's a military operation in Laos called "Operation Tailwind" was directed toward US military defectors, and that Sarin Nerve gas was used during the operation.

You are directed to review military records, archives, historical writings, other appropriate information sources, and interview individuals with personal knowledge for the purpose of determining if there is any truth in this matter.

Please provide me with the results of your review within 30 days.

A handwritten signature, likely of Bill Clinton, is written in the center of the page. The signature is in cursive and appears to read "Bill Clinton".

U10018 / 98

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

This document records remarks made June 23 in a meeting from 2:34 p.m. to 4:14 p.m. June 23 in Room 3E869, The Pentagon. The seven individuals listed below, all former U.S. Army officers, volunteered to share their knowledge of Operation Tailwind, a U.S. military operation conducted in September 1970 in Laos, with members of the Defense Department group investigating allegations made in a June 7 NewsStand [Time] CNN TV program concerning Operation Tailwind.

1. MG. John Singlaub, USA, (Ret.), a past commander of Studies and Observations Group (SOG), MACV;
2. COL. John "Skip" Sadler, USA, (Ret.), Commander, SOG, Ground Studies Group during Operation Tailwind;
3. COL. Robert Pinkerton, USA, (Ret.), Operations Officer, SOG during Operation Tailwind;
4. LTC. Eugene "Gene" McCarley, USA, (Ret.), who, as a captain, commanded the Operation Tailwind force on the ground;
5. Maj. John Plaster, USAR, (Ret.), SOG member and author of the 1997 book, "SOG: The Secret Wars of America's Commandos in Vietnam";
6. CPT. Michael "Gary" Rose, USA, (Ret.), medic on Operation Tailwind;
7. Mr. Rudy Gresham, personal representative of ADM Thomas H. Moore, USN, (Ret), and spokesperson for the Special Forces Association.

The meeting was chaired by Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Rudy de Leon.

MEETING

Secretary de Leon addressing the CNN allegations, made these introductory points:

Thanked guests for coming to the Pentagon to share their knowledge of Operation Tailwind and assist DoD in fulfilling the June 9 directive from the Secretary of Defense to inquire into the allegations made by CNN/Time concerning Operation Tailwind.

Invited guests to introduce themselves and indicate their role in Operation Tailwind.

DISCUSSION

SADLER: "The buck should start and stop here [with me]. I was responsible for planning it [Operation Tailwind], getting it approved, and directing it."

At no time was there any mention of defectors or deserters or nerve gas. Tailwind participants did not observe any "whites" or "round eyes" on the ground. Nerve gas was never used. This was a terrible piece of journalism by CNN.

Gen. [Creighton] Abrams approved the operation. He was briefed daily during the operation.

The After Action Report (AAR) of the operation should be on file "somewhere in the Pentagon." There is nothing in that AAR that substantiates the CNN story about observing or killing defectors or using nerve gas. After the operation, there was never any report or even mention of any defectors encountered or nerve gas used.

DE LEON: Purpose of operation?

SADLER: There were two primary assignments for Operation Tailwind: 1) "to help relieve enemy pressure coming down from the north - it was a beehive there," and 2) "in the area of Chavane, we knew there was something in there in force." [Given that the enemy had put substantial assets in Chavane], "We had to go see why the area was so important to the enemy."

The operation succeeded in gathering exceptionally good intelligence about the enemy. "The two footlockers of documents we got, [General] Abrams described as 'the best logistics intelligence ever gained in the entire Vietnam war.'" [The documents described the support structure for and operation of the Ho Chi Minh trail.]

PLASTER: [Gave a presentation using slides, including slides of photographs taken during the operation. The specific points he made are contained in his briefing slides and supporting paper packet. (The slides, less the slides of photographs, and supporting documents are attached to this MFR.) The presentation covered: dates and mission of the Tailwind operation; SOG organization, command and control relationships, and areas of operation; declassified pages from a U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam [MACV] report of operations; facts, arguments and statements by Tailwind participants that rebut the specific CNN/Time allegations; and attempts made during CNN's preparation of their story to convince the CNN producers that they "had it wrong."]

SADLER: When [General] Abrams took over from [General] Westmoreland, he took more control of SOG operations. He resented the fact that an Army colonel [Col. Sadler] was commanding Navy and Air Force units.

PLASTER: For reasons of security, SOG was a compartmented organization. One part of the organization often didn't know what the other part was doing.

B Company ["Hatchet Forces"] conducted the Tailwind mission. The area of the mission was in Laos, where Highway 165 met Highway 966. That's about 10 kilometers east of Chavane (outside the area of operations) and 25 miles into Laos, not 200 miles as [Tailwind platoon leader 1/Lt. Robert L.] Van Buskirk claims in his book – "that would put you 75 miles into Thailand."

"The idea [of Operation Tailwind] was to create a ruckus in the enemy's rear so they'd have to pull back forces. The Hmong guerrillas could then seize their objectives, and in fact, they did."

From the time the Tailwind force landed in Laos September 11, 1970, they were fighting. About 12 soldiers from B Company were brought in to a landing zone (LZ) about 20 minutes before the operation began. Then two H-53s helicopters brought in the rest of the unit. Over the course of the mission, there were many US and Montagnard casualties.

On Day 4 of the operation, two dogs came up to Lieutenant Van Buskirk's patrol. The patrol followed the dogs back to their owners in a Viet Cong [VC] base camp. It was not a village. There were no civilians in the base camp. There were no Caucasians.

The VC at the base camp put up a very poor defense. "The VC never believed we'd attack them from the ground that deep in Laos." As the photos document, the camp had bunkers to protect from air attack but no fighting bunkers to defend against ground attack. "They were bomb shelters, and we just threw in grenades." Further, the VC in the camp were inexperienced logistics soldiers, not trained combat soldiers.

USAF A-1 Skyraiders operating out of Thailand provided close air support (CAS). In some cases, when the CAS encountered heavy anti aircraft defenses, the forward air controller (FAC) called for CBU [Cluster Bomb Unit] 19, a concentrated tear gas, to suppress the anti aircraft.

DE LEON: Was that also referred to as "vomit gas"?

PLASTER: I heard it referred to as "sleeping gas." CBU 30 ordnance was similar to CBU 19. Tear gas was rarely used: "It was very close hold."

Q: Who had authority to employ tear gas in air strikes?

SADLER: I had the authority to call in tear gas. I could use it on my authority. We had tear gas in hand grenades as well. Headquarters 7th Air Force also had the authority to use tear gas on a case-by-case basis.

SINGLAUB: The proper term is "riot control gas." It was and is used by the police in this country. It has a very pronounced effect. "You feel like you're dying." We used it to suppress anti-aircraft fire.

CHARLES CRAGIN: Was riot control agent unique to the military or did civilian police use the same agent?

SINGLAUB: It was the same thing.

SADLER: The tear gas used does not require decontamination at all. "If it had been nerve gas, no one would have made it back from the operation alive."

BRIG. GEN. DAVID ARMSTRONG: Did the FAC (Forward Air Controller) lay on the tear gas or did you [McCARLEY] call for it?

McCARLEY: The FAC called it in, not me. We were carrying M17 gas masks. That was my SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) for missions.

PLASTER: The mask carrier was stamped "FOR RIOT CONTROL AGENT ONLY." The masks weren't in good enough shape to handle nerve gas.

I flew 450 missions in 1970 and 1971 in support of SOG operations. We never once used gas on any of those missions.

To use gas, the FAC would have to make the request through 7th Air Force.

McCARLEY: The FAC advised me the gas was coming in. He could see the NVA [North Vietnamese Army] massing. We had fought for four days and were out of water and almost out of ammo. We were exhausted. He could see that once we got to the extraction zone, we would be overrun. The FAC called for the gas. I never requested it.

SADLER: FAC's were our lifeline. We had no artillery that could fire that far [from Vietnam into the area of operations in Laos]. The FAC's provided all of our fire support.

PLASTER: [Showed photos of McCarley and Rose immediately after the mission with no shirts on (just after exiting the extraction helicopters).] (Rhetorically), "Do these men look like they just got hit with nerve gas? Rose was recommended for the Medal of Honor. He received the DSC (Distinguished Service Cross).

"The great accomplishment and byproduct of the operation was the satchels of documents we brought back." [Showed photograph of Montagnard soldier carrying satchels, as well as a slide of a MACV journal extract (attached). The extract notes the importance of the intelligence gained about the NVA 599th Transportation Group's operation of the Ho Chi Minh trail.]

CRAGIN: [CNN producer] April Oliver said she read the MACV journal cover to cover.

PLASTER: Yes. [Plaster explained the repeated efforts by himself and others to convince Oliver that her allegations were baseless. Those efforts are documented in the attached slides.]

ROSE: "My wounded were extremely distressed by the gas. We had stripped them down to lessen the weight and tied them to poles for transport. I couldn't do anything for them."

PLASTER: CNN relied on Jim Cathey, who said he was a member of "the Rat Pack Commandos." There was no such unit. Fox News just told us that Cathey is an Air Force supply sergeant who was stationed at Tan Son Nhat Air Base.

"Jay Graves was not a recon[naissance] team leader in Kontum. He was not in Operation Tailwind, but he was [nonetheless] interviewed [by CNN] for 7 ½ hours."

I have four statements from people contacted by CNN. They denied the allegations. In each case, the producer, April Oliver, became angry when we wouldn't support her allegations.

McCARLEY: There was no mention whatsoever in briefings before or after Tailwind of "round eyes," POWs, or nerve gas.

(Rhetorically) With all of the photos taken of the base camp [including those just shown by Plaster], why were there no photos of these "round eyes" supposedly encountered? The photographic documentation was extensive and shows that there were no Caucasians encountered.

Rose should have gotten the Medal of Honor.

SADLER: Rose was wounded three times during the operation. He treated all 16 U.S. soldiers on the mission at least once each. He treated all of the wounded Montagnards.

McCARLEY: He shielded a wounded man with his own body. I don't think he ate or slept during the entire [four day] operation. He treated all of the wounded after the operation even though he was wounded himself. We were told the Medal of Honor was downgraded to a DSC because he [Rose] was not in an official combat status -- it was a "black operation."

SADLER: "Another reason the defector story doesn't pass muster is that it was a standing imperative that if you saw POWs, rescuing them became your mission, regardless of what mission you were on." There were incentives to returning with enemy POWs or deserters--\$100 for us, and indigenous people would get a Seiko watch.

ARMSTRONG: CNN says they were told Tailwind was a reconnaissance in force. What was the specific objective of the mission?

McCARLEY: "We were looking for a fight." The mission was to draw the enemy into our area and relieve pressure on our forces to the north — to test the enemy's strength and to create a diversion. There were no specific recon objectives.

PLASTER: Our enduring goal was to take prisoners [for intelligence purposes], not to kill the enemy. We were an intelligence-gathering unit.

ARMSTRONG: [He read aloud the definition of a reconnaissance in force.] CNN wanted to know the objectives of the recon. They didn't understand that this [Tailwind] was an attack mission, not a recon.

McCARLEY: (Rhetorically) Out of the 200 people CNN interviewed, why did they just use those few individuals who did not deny the CNN allegations?

ROSE: "By Day 4 of the mission, the wounded were stacking up. There were a lot of guys on morphine, lashed to poles. It was hard for them to keep what was happening straight."

It wasn't a village we went into as CNN said, it was a compound. I came up [to the compound] after the fight was over. "I saw only two bodies, both dead from small arms fire, and I've seen enough people dead from small arms fire to know what that looks like."

[ROSE vividly recounted the final hours of the mission as the force moved to the evacuation point.] Describing the encounter with gas, he said: "We got hit with gas. It was CS [tear gas]. I know what CS is from basic training and from a prior incident at Kontum. It's like skunk. Once you smell it, you never forget, even if it's fifty years later. It was definitely tear gas. I was wincing, my eyes watered, my nose and lungs burned. You turn your face into the wind and it clears. My wounded were in distress. I never saw any evidence of nerve gas. It was CS! It's criminal to say our own Air Force would drop nerve gas on us!"

"On the LZ waiting to be extracted, we were running out of ammo. I went through all mine. The third ship [helicopter] coming in got hit and crashed into the water. I remember a Marine pulling us onto another helicopter to get us out."

"It's hard for me to have to explain to my 20-year-old daughter that we did nothing wrong. CNN owes us an apology and they need to say they got it wrong."

LT. COL. TOM BEGINES: We [ROSE and I] were talking before the meeting. He said something very important just in casual conversation but it should be discussed now. He said they carried atropine on the operation. Many of the media from their coverage of Desert Storm know that atropine is the acknowledged antidote for nerve gas. Some will take the fact that the patrol carried atropine as evidence we intended to encounter or use nerve gas.

ROSE: All of the medics I knew in A and B [Hatchet Forces] companies routinely carried atropine in syrettes on missions. These weren't the atropine dispensers that are used to treat for nerve gas. It wasn't carried because we thought we'd encounter nerve gas. We carried atropine because we didn't have any snake bit kits or anything to treat poisonous insect bites. I don't know if there are any scientific studies about it but we [the Hatchet company medics] believed that since snake venom and poisonous insect bites act on the nervous system like nerve gas, using atropine would slow down the venom's action long enough to get a man to the hospital. I only had occasion to use atropine once in my entire time with the SOG, to treat a Vietnamese child bitten by a poisonous insect.

PLASTER: [Showed the group the award narration Lieutenant VAN BUSKIRK submitted soon after the mission for Specialist Five Craig Schmidt. The award narration composed by VAN BUSKIRK soon after the operation states in part "When the company later moved to a landing zone for extraction they were subject to tear gas . . ."] Van Buskirk said at the time that the gas he encountered was tear gas. There is no mention of supposed nerve gas.

PINKERTON: I never heard in the year I was SOG operations officer any reference to defectors.

Soldiers used the term "round eyes" to describe Caucasian women. I never heard those words used otherwise. Our mission was to rescue Americans. Command Sergeant Major Billy WALL [spelling?] was the greatest warrior I ever saw. He was a legend. But he was reduced to tears one time when we were alerted to the possible presence of American prisoners and they were moved before we could get them.

SADLER: We had two guys killed in attempts to rescue Americans.

SINGLAUB: Concerning the CNN statement that they attribute to me. CNN showed my picture and said that I had said it may have been necessary to kill Americans. They used material from the interview I did with them a year ago. I initially refused the interview because Peter ARNETT was going to be involved. He's dishonest and despicable. CNN tricked me! They said ARNETT was not going to be involved. April OLIVER attached my comments out of context to a completely different story.

CNN did the same thing with Admiral MOORER.

I think CNN took statements from many people completely out of context. I told CNN producer OLIVER many times there was no story. ARNETT just wanted to air his old contention -- first made by him years ago during the war -- that nerve agent was used in Vietnam.

It's sad that we have to spend so much time and energy defending ourselves against allegations of things that never happened.

The story that has not been told and should be told to the American people is our efforts to rescue Americans.

GRESHAM: These sensational, untrue allegations are just like those made in the media that U.S. special forces were involved in the assassination of Martin Luther King. I worked for two years as the spokesperson for special forces to dispel those completely false allegations. We prevailed. Colonel John SMITH in Army Public Affairs can tell you all about that.

Colonel SMITH called me two or three days before CNN aired their story. He'd been informed of seven and seven-and-one-half hour interviews of people conducted by CNN for this story. There were repeated attempts by CNN to twist their words.

The CNN story made headlines in London, Paris, all over the world.

I'm also the special forces investigator for these allegations.

"MOORER told the *Baltimore Sun* that CNN put words in his mouth."

"[After the CNN interview] Admiral MOORER and I had very candid conversations." [Retired Army Chief of Staff] Bruce PALMER and General DAVIS know Admiral MOORER. MOORER called me and asked me to be his spokesperson. The allegation was made after the CNN story aired that the Pentagon pressured him to clarify the record but he told me the Pentagon never pressured him.

[During my service in Vietnam], I also worked as PA [Public Affairs] for WESTMORELAND.

I got a telephone call from Tom JOHNSON, President of CNN. I told him CNN was flat wrong in their story. CNN sent a producer named Jim CONNORS [spelling?] to see me. I rebutted all of their allegations in detail and gave them the true facts. I pointed out that CNN had virtually no documentation to support their allegations. CNN offered Jay GRAVES' [a CNN source for their story] DD Form 214 [Record of Service] showing he was in Vietnam as supposed proof that he was on Tailwind. That's laughable! CNN's response to me was that I was "naïve" about what happened! CONNORS said he did not have the authority to retract the story.

There are 15,000 members in our special forces association. I asked for any information that might give any credibility to the CNN allegations. I've gotten nothing in response.

The former SOG members present gave an exclusive to Fox Network today. We also talked to ABC.

ARMSTRONG: Tailwind was our deepest operation into Laos. Did you need special permission to do Tailwind?

SADLER: I'll give you a qualified "yes." ABRAMS had the authority to order the operation but it required the tacit consent of other organizations. We let people know about the operation and their silence meant acquiescence.

PINKERTON: I sent a message to CINCPAC [Commander-in-Chief, Pacific] before the operation.

Q. [ARMSTRONG?] With regard to the U.S. ambassador to Laos. Did you need to have his permission to use tear gas, especially since that might be portrayed as using a new weapon, an escalation, and the political situation was tense at the time?

SADLER: ABRAMS said to get ambassadorial approval. We went to NKP [Nakhon Phanom, Thailand].

SINGLAUB: I'd go to NKP or Udom [also in Thailand] to coordinate operations in Laos.

CAPTAIN (USN) PIETROPAOLI: Wouldn't the SOG know when CS gas was being loaded on Air Force aircraft for use?

SADLER: We coordinated with C-130s for airstrikes. The code words were "hillsborough" during the daytime and "moonbeam" during the nighttime.

PLASTER: There was a brigadier general with the airborne FAC in such cases, I think with his Laotian counterpart.

ARMSTRONG: Yesterday, CNN made the contention that the ambassador would have to approve the use of new weapons [like tear gas].

SADLER: We got clearance from NKP during the initial coordination for the operation. The ambassador did control things in Laos.

ARMSTRONG: I talked with Admiral MOORER. It wasn't clear to me what he actually said to CNN.

GRESHAM: He's 86. He said OLIVER tried to put words in his mouth. He said he never saw documentation but "had heard rumors" of the use of sarin. He said that 24 hours before the CNN program aired CNN tried hard to get him to say he knew sarin had been used. CNN did three sessions with him. They tried to charm an 86-year-old man. He told me he is now clear in his mind that there was no nerve gas, no defectors. Everything that he said that was controversial was said off camera. CNN said he read the transcript before their program aired but he said he only glanced at it.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS KEN BACON: I think CNN is "this close" to retracting the story.

UNDER SECRETARY De LEON: We want the true story told.

BACON: Who is Michael HAGEN?

PLASTER: He's one of the 16 U.S. participants in the operation. Ted WISEREN [spelling?] believes CNN told HAGEN "his paralysis is the result of the nerve gas used during Tailwind."

BACON: He's quoted by CNN saying, "The government doesn't want you to know, but I know it was nerve gas."

ROSE: My wife talked to him yesterday.

"I'm living proof that toxic gas was not dropped on us that day. Nobody showed any signs of exposure to toxic gas."

BACON: Was there ever any nerve gas [stored] in Laos or Thailand?

PLASTER: I can say conclusively, and I've done a lot of research into SOG operations, that I've never heard of any nerve gas in country.

SINGLAUB: Commanders tell me that nerve gas was not available. Talk with Harry C. "Hinnie" ADERHOLT [spelling?] in Fort Walton Beach, Florida.

DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY SHERIDAN: Besides tear gas, what else was unusual about the Tailwind operation?

PINKERTON: It was the largest force [company-size] we had ever committed in Laos up until then. Usually, the SOG missions were just three to five man operations on the ground. We would go after lucrative intelligence targets. It was also a sensitive mission because it was outside the normal AO [area of operations].

SINGLAUB: The story of "Salt and Pepper" [the supposed two U.S. defectors] has existed for a long time. I think it's a disinformation campaign.

CRAGIN: What kind of lead time was there for the FAC to call in tear gas?

McCARLEY: It was normally 2-3 hours from the time of request. Again, I didn't call in the tear gas so I don't know.

PLASTER: "'Sandies [sp?]' was the codeword for fire suppression for SAR [Search and Rescue]. Any SAR people will tell you they had aircraft on strip alert. Some could have been loaded with CBU-19 [tear gas]. They could have been diverted to the Tailwind operation on an emergency basis when the operation ran into trouble. They knew there were heavy anti-aircraft defenses and the Tailwind force was in serious trouble.

ARMSTRONG: They knew they had to do an extraction. The Air Force could have planned to use tear gas.

CRAGIN: Do you know the names of any of the FAC's that day?

McCARLEY: All three SOG "covey riders" with the FACs have died.

PLASTER: Lloyd G. O'DANIELS is an auditor in Springfield, Virginia. He flew as a backup FAC that day.

Air Force General EBERHART [now Vice Chief of Staff] was with the FAC unit but he went home [to the U.S.] before Tailwind.

DAVIDSON: I've talked with some A-1 guys but I've not been able to locate the FAC that day the tear gas was used.

DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY SCHWEITER: Do you know the name or callsign of the pilot who dropped the tear gas?

PLASTER: *Newsweek* says it was Art Bishop.

One more thing. The SOG deserves a Presidential Unit Citation for Tailwind. It was a black operation, now declassified. They deserve it.

SADLER/PINKERTON/ROSE: [Strongly agreed.]

Other OSD attendees at the meeting are as follows:

Mr. C. Cragin, Acting ASD(RA); Mr. W. Davidson, AA to SECAF; Mr. J.B. Hudson, AA to SECARMY; Ms. J. Fites, DUSD(PI); CAPT J. Pietropaoli, JCS; BG D. Armstrong, USA, (Ret.), JCS; Mr. R. Destatte, DPMO; COL E. Winborn, OSD(LA); Mr. J. Schweiter, DASD(M&P); Col T. Bowman, OUSD(P&R); Mr. K. Bacon, ASD(PA); Mr. B. Sheridan, PDAS(SO/LIC); Mr. B. Carson, OUSD(P&R); Cdr D. Newman, OGC.

THOMAS J. BEGINES
Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army
Designated as Recorder

Attachments

Suggested Citation Accompanying
Statement of Lt. Robert Van Buskirk

Specialist Five Craig D. Schmidt, 543-60-1312, United States Army, Special Operations Augmentation, Command and Control Detachment Central, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, Republic of Vietnam, is recommended for award of the Silver Star Medal for heroism in battle during the period 12 through 14 September 1970 in connection with military operations against hostile enemy force in the Republic of Vietnam. SP5 Schmidt was serving as a squad leader with a company-size exploitation force that was on a mission deep in enemy-controlled territory. On the morning of the 12th, the first platoon came under fire from an estimated 40 NVA employing automatic weapons, B-40 rockets, mortars and hand grenades. SP5 Schmidt was called upon to reinforce the left flank. He immediately moved his men into position but was wounded by an enemy grenade. Some of his SCU [Montagnards] squad members were also wounded and others refused to advance into the heavy fire. Although wounded, SP5 Schmidt continued his advance into the fire, disregarding his own safety and delivering heavy fire on the enemy. Only two of his squad members followed him. Their accurate fire killed many of the enemy and the others were forced to withdraw to the right where they were cutoff by another squad. This contact lasted over an hour. SP5 Schmidt's aggressiveness and excellent conduct under fire greatly contributed to the annihilation of almost the entire enemy force. The next day, 13 September, another group of enemy struck the forward element of the company as they left their RON [rest overnight] site. SP 5 Schmidt had been wounded a second time and was in the center of the company with the other wounded personnel. Two men were attempting to hold off the numerically superior enemy force. SP5 Schmidt left his safer position with the other wounded and moved alone to the point of contact and began firing on the enemy. On the 14th of September the point element was again pinned down by enemy fire, from the direct front. The squads moved on line and began an assault on the enemy position. SP5 Schmidt was the leader of one of these squads and despite his wounds he charged forward towards the enemy location. They soon discovered that the enemy were trying to protect their base camp, a battalion-size, well-defended area. SP5 Schmidt led his men into the camp, through the enemy fire. The assaults was a success and 54 enemy were found dead in the camp. There were more dead on the flanks and in the front. When the company later moved to a landing zone for extraction they were subjected to tear gas that had been dropped by friendly aircraft but then drifted to their position. There were three minutes in which to find an LZ. Although wounded and sick from the gas SP5 Schmidt ran past his point man and began jumping up and down to flatten the tall elephant grass. It was largely due to his actions that the landing zone was cleared and the company was able to be extracted. His courage and valor throughout this operation reflect great credit upon himself and are well deserving of the Silver Star Medal.

1. Eyewitness Statement
2. Proposed Citation

Robert L. Van Buskirk
1LT,

[Signature]

TRUE FACTS
CONCERNING OPERATION TAILWIND

DATE: 11 - 14 September 1970

LOCATION: Target Area Tango-Two, eighteen kilometers east of Chavane, Laos

UNIT: Company B, Command & Control Central, (Special Operations Augmentation),
5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Kontum, Republic of Vietnam

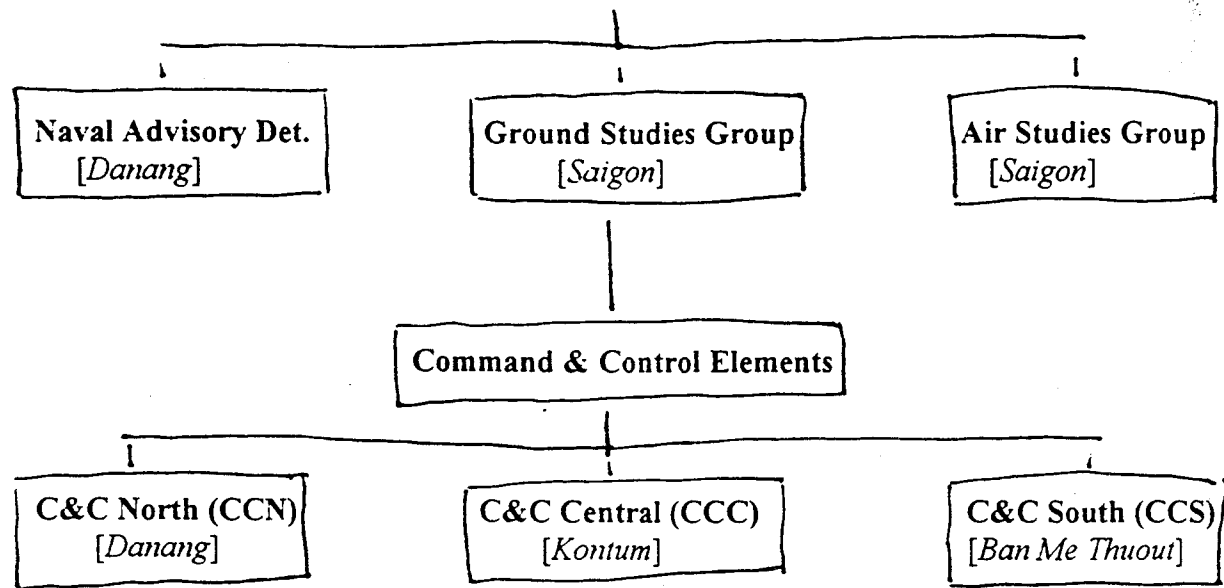
COMMANDER: Captain Eugene C. McCarley

MISSION: Conduct a diversionary attack along the Highway 165 road structure, to draw NVA forces away from the Bolovens Plateau, to support an attack there by CIA-supported guerrillas.

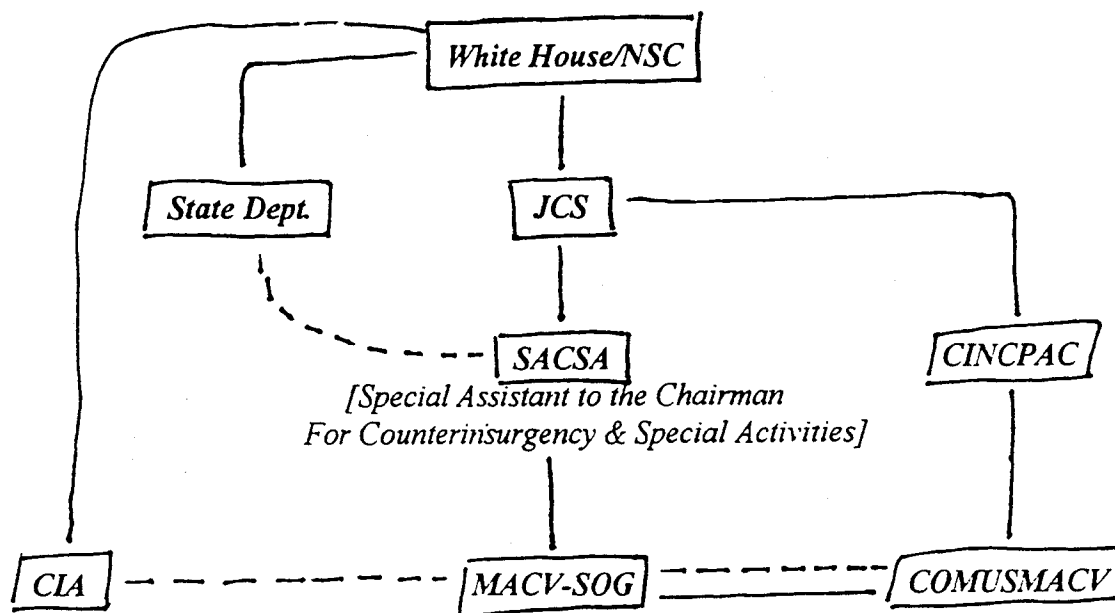
FORCES INVOLVED: Co. B, CCC, with 16 USSF and 120 Montagnards; support by USAF A-1 Skyraiders; USMC HH-53 and AH-1Cobra gunship units from Danang, South Vietnam.

SOG HEADQUARTERS

[Saigon]



OPERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS



MACV-SOG

The Studies and Observations Group

SOG was a Joint Service, Unconventional Warfare Task Force, which existed JAN 1964 - APR 1972, with responsibility for:

- Operating (indigenous) agent networks in North Vietnam, Laos & Cambodia
- Reconnaissance and Surveillance along the Ho Chi Minh Trail and enemy base areas in Laos and Cambodia;
- Small-scale (company or less) raiding and road interdiction missions along the Laotian highway system;
- Crafting and Dissemination of "black propaganda" in support of the U.S. war effort;
- POW and MIA tracking, and attempted recovery/rescue;
- Working in collaboration with other U.S. agencies (CIA, NSA, etc.), on special efforts which relate to the above missions.

CNN/TIME SPECIFIC ALLEGATIONS

During the September 1970 Operation Tailwind, a raid by SOG personnel behind enemy lines in southern Laos:

Time article: "...the reason for the raid: The targeted village was believed to be harboring a large group of American G.I.s who had defected to the enemy. The Special Forces unit's job was to kill them."

The article went on to allege that this operation twice employed sarin nerve gas, both as a preparatory attack on the "village" the night before the SOG ground force hit it, and at the very end of the operation, to facilitate extraction of the SOG men.

Therefore, there are three distinct charges:

1. SOG targeted and killed unarmed, unresisting American defectors in Laos
2. That SOG men killed women and children in the Laotian "village."
3. To support this operation, the USAF dropped sarin nerve gas on two occasions.

Van Buskirk's Claim he Killed American "Defectors"

Time article [15 June]:

"Suddenly Van Buskirk spotted two "longshadows," a name for taller Caucasians. One was sliding down a "spider hole" into the underground tunnel system beneath the camp. The other was running toward it. "Early 20s. Blond hair. Looks like he was running off a beach in California," remembers Van Buskirk.... The lieutenant gave chase but just missed the blond man as he slipped into the tunnel. He shouted down the hole, identifying himself and offering to take the man home. "F___ you," came the reply. "No, it's f___ you," answered Van Buskirk as he dropped in a white phosphorous grenade, presumably killing both longshadows."

Van Buskirk was the only Tailwind participant to claim Americans or Caucasians were present. CNN offered "confirmation" by two men who were not on the ground in Laos, and did not participate in this operation.

**CNN/TIME'S STORY OF THE SURVEILLANCE
MISSION DOES NOT STAND UP**

It's claimed one team observed the "village" from two miles away, with only binoculars [*Newsweek*], yet the recon men could discern between Asians and Caucasians:

- The area of Operation Tailwind is heavily jungled, with visible line-of-sight measured in tens of yards;
- Ordinary binoculars lack the magnification and acuity to resolve human shapes two miles away, so the race of someone under surveillance cannot be discerned;
- The (likely fraud) Sgt. Jim Cathey claimed the codeword for Americans was "longshadows," while the actual SOG codeword was "Strawhats."

***CNN FALSELY CLAIMED AN ADVANCE RECON
MISSION HAD SURVEILLED THE "VILLAGE" IN LAOS***

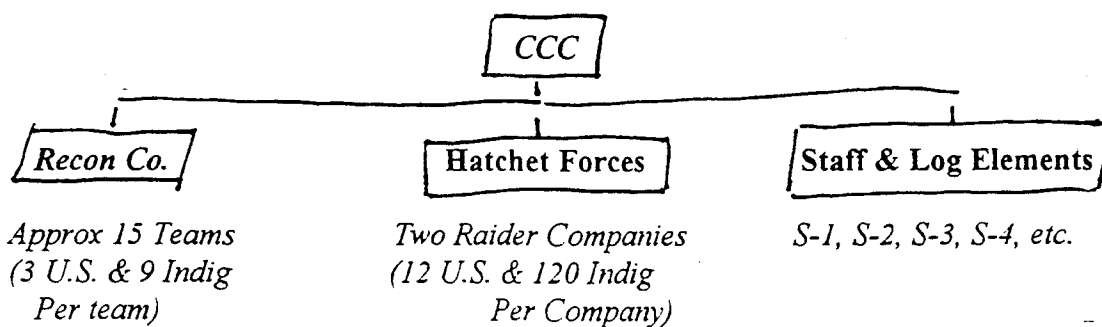
- Captain McCarley, the mission commander, knows no such advance recon took place;
- The two CNN/Time sources had nothing to do with this operation — they were not there and their alleged recon mission could not have happened:
 - Maj. Plaster served in the recon company responsible for such missions in this area of Laos, personally knew the other 15 or so recon team leaders who would have had to have run such an operation, and knows that neither of these men served in his reconnaissance unit
 - One man, USAF Sgt. Jim Cathey, told the media such a fantastic story that he is almost certainly a fraud.
 - The other man, Sgt. Jay Graves, a genuine Special Forces Vietnam veteran, *never* participated in cross-border operations into Laos. He served in SOG for only a few months in 1970, as an instructor, not a field operative. But his quotes in *CNN* and *Time* never quite claim he was on Tailwind.

**COMMAND & CONTROL CENTRAL
5TH SPECIAL FORCES GROUP**

Kontum, South Vietnam

Area of Responsibility: Southern Laos along Ho Chi Minh Trail corridor, and northern Cambodia, each to a depth of about 12 miles.

Duties: Conduct top secret, deniable unconventional reconnaissance and raiding missions behind enemy lines in Laos and Cambodia



**CNN'S CLAIM THAT THE TARGET WAS A
"VILLAGE"
IS SUPPORTED ONLY BY TWO MEN WHO WERE NOT THERE**

- Not even Lt. Van Buskirk claimed it was a "village"
- USAF Sgt. Cathey (identified by *Newsweek* as a supply sergeant] was not on this operation, and his claims reek of fraud;
- U.S. Army Sgt. Jay Graves could not have been there — he was not assigned to CCC, the unit responsible for such missions in this part of Laos.

OP/ED PIECE BY A USMC COBRA PILOT

[Extract from Monterey, Calif. *Herald*, 14 June 98]

Lt. Joe Driscoll:

"To listen to CNN you'd have thought that nerve gas was dropped and the good guys walked out over dead bodies. That wasn't the way it was.... They distorted, sensationalized and misrepresented it to fit their political spin and marketing hype.... If it really is a fact that nerve gas was used, the real story would have been that it hadn't worked so well."

CONFIRMATION BY A USMC HH-53 PILOT

[Extract from 1997 book, *Primer of the Helicopter War*]

Captain Bill Beardall, HMMH-463:

"We were briefed by a U.S. Army captain who told us we were going to carry 200 Americans and Montagnards deep into Laos. We were to be a diversionary force for a large-scale attack on a major artery of the Ho Chi Minh Trail."

And reference the extraction, four days later:

"It was going to be close and my gas mask was restricting my view. The area had been prepped with a vomiting agent to help Keep the bad guys' heads down."

CONFIRMATION BY USAF A-1 SKYRAIDER PILOTS

USAF A-1 Pilot, "Spad 03," Tom Stump:

[Extract from e-Mail Message]

"...I am trying to let everyone know this Sarin thing is bullshit but I must admit I do not remember this mission like it was yesterday."

[Extract from e-mail message to MG Perry Smith, (ret.)]

"I can only tell the truth of what happened that day. There was never any Sarin gas on that battlefield. Had there been, those 16 Americans would now be memorialized on a Wall in Washington..."

CONFIRMATION BY USAF A-1 SKYRAIDER PILOTS

USAF A-1 Pilot, Art Bishop:

[Newsweek, 22 June 1998]

"Art Bishop, one of the two American pilots who bombed the enemy, wrote in his journal the next day that his payload was 'CBU-30' — tear gas. The allegation of sarin gas, he told Newsweek, is a "lot of nonsense."

**VAN BUSKIRK ALLEGED SOG ENCOURAGED
THE KILLING OF AMERICAN DEFECTORS**

CNN Transcript [7 June]:

*It was pretty well understood that if you came across a defector,
and could prove it beyond a reasonable doubt, do it, under any circumstance,
kill them. It wasn't about bringing them back, it was to kill them."*

FACT: As an intelligence-gathering organization, SOG's highest accolades went to men who brought back enemy prisoners — and an American defector would have been a bonanza on a par with a capturing a high-level enemy officer.

FACT: To emphasize the importance of capturing prisoners, SOG offered three special incentives to those who brought them back:

- A. Bonus of \$100 to each American
- B. Bonus of cash and a new Seiko wristwatch to each indigenous team member
- C. A "free" R&R to Taiwan or Bangkok for Americans

FACT: Major Plaster and his teammates received these bonuses for capturing a prisoner five months before Tailwind in Laos, operating from the same base as Van Buskirk.

Although *Time* and CNN alleged the objective was a village harboring U.S. defectors, Lt. Van Buskirk contradicted both claims during a subsequent Q&A Session:

VAN BUSKIRK:*Understand this camp was a military base camp. We had attacked it at first light. Our LZ was on the other side. We were almost beat before this. We were all wounded. Were just about out of ammunition. And we'd come into the camp quite by accident. My sergeant and I had seen two dogs, and we decided to follow the dogs, kill their owners, and then go to the LZ. The dogs took us to the camp....*"

LT. VAN BUSKIRK'S CHANGING STORY

Upon return, Capt. McCarley and Lt. Van Buskirk traveled to Saigon to brief Gen. Creighton Abrams. Due to his head wounds, Capt. McCarley had Van Buskirk deliver the briefing while he and Chief SOG, Col. John Sadler, watched.

In his formal briefing notes, Lt. Van Buskirk:

- Admitted the mission was “to create a diversion in support of, and in consonance with, the CAS [CIA] launched Operation Gauntlet.”
- Only once cited the use of gas — “CBU-19” (CS tear gas) — which was employed “to prep the area” and assist their unit extraction.
- His briefing does not mention American defectors, nerve gas or a “village.”

CNN "VERIFICATION" OF NERVE GAS BY SP5 CRAIG SCHMIDT

Time article [15 June]:

"It doesn't surprise me in the slightest bit that it was nerve gas. It worked too well." [attributed to Craig Schmidt]

No such on-camera quote was offered in the 7 June CNN report.

Schmidt told *Washington Times* [17 June]:

"I still today don't know where they got my quote. I would never have said that." he said. "I don't know what it was. I believe my exact quote was, 'I would be surprised if it was nerve gas.'"

On 14 June, Schmidt told CNN the [unknown] gas was effective:

"It had a dramatic effect on the amount of resistance we encountered, as soon as it was deployed from the A-IEs. It was almost instantaneous. It was very quick."

LT. VAN BUSKIRK'S CHANGING STORY

1983: Although his book, *Tailwind*, contains not one hint of defectors or nerve gas, his Author's Note says:

"...this book is, to the best of my memory, a true account of what took place."

June 1998: Van Buskirk tells *Newsweek*:

"...he had forgotten the nerve gas and defectors entirely for 24 years — until he suddenly recalled the events during a five-hour interview with CNN producer April Oliver this year.... he had repressed the memory on Easter Sunday 1974... [while] he was in a German prison on charges that he had sold weapons to a terrorist gang. (The charges were later dropped.)... he had a vision of Christ on that Easter Sunday morning, he had been drinking heavily and was haunted by nightmares."

**IN SEPTEMBER 1970, LT. VAN BUSKIRK
SIGNED A STATEMENT THAT CS GAS WAS EMPLOYED**

Shortly after the operation, Lt. Van Buskirk submitted SP5 Craig Schmidt for a Silver Star for Tailwind. In the suggested citation (signed by Van Buskirk) that accompanied his eyewitness statement, Van Buskirk wrote:

"When the company later moved to a landing zone for extraction they were subjected to tear gas that had been dropped by friendly aircraft but that had drifted to their position.... Although wounded and sick from the gas, SP5 Schmidt ran past his point man and began jumping up and down to flatten the tall elephant grass...."

**LT. VAN BUSKIRK SAYS "NERVE GAS"
ALLEGATIONS CAME NOT FROM HIM BUT FROM CNN**

[Baltimore Sun, 15 June 1998]

"It was CNN, Van Buskirk says, that told him about the nerve gas after he told them he had been choking and vomiting as he ran to the helicopters. He had always assumed it was tear gas."

"What they said was, 'The symptoms you're describing are the symptoms of nerve gas, not tear gas.' They said, 'What have you got to say about that?'"

**CNN KNEW TAILWIND MEDIC DENIED
ANY USE OF NERVE GAS**

[E-mail Message]

Sgt Gary Rose, the Tailwind medic, submitted for the Medal of Honor:

"...I was interviewed by telephone by Amy Karsada, (CNN), and could not say poison gas was used. So anyone who could place doubt about the use of nerve gas was not placed on camera."

"If they had dropped GB on us, I think a lot fewer of us (like possibly none) would be alive. Concentrated CS mixed in some type emolument would have stopped almost anyone in their tracks. I think the gas used was a concentrated CS."

***SOG VETERAN WARNED CNN THE ALLEGATIONS
WERE WRONG***

LTC Edward Wolcuff, USA (ret) was contacted several times by CNN producer April Oliver, each time explaining to her in detail why these allegations were either distrustful or illogical. Oliver insisted she had "interviewed approximately 200 people" and "authoritative figures" had confirmed the information.

"Despite my best efforts to focus Ms Oliver on a more reasoned line of inquiry, she apparently found it more profitable to formulate a bizarre premise and exploit it for sake of the drama and controversy — regardless of the facts."

[FAXed statement to Maj. Plaster, 21 June 1998]

**THE ONLY TAILWIND PARTICIPANT ON-CAMERA TO VERIFY
VAN BUSKIRK'S CLAIMS OF NERVE GAS**

Sgt. Mike Hagen, a Tailwind Participant:

[CNN Transcript] *Nerve gas. The government don't want it called that. They want to call it incapacitating agent, or some other form. But it was nerve gas.*

But prior to the broadcast, he phoned SOG veteran Ted Wicorek and said he had no idea what was causing his limb paralysis — Wicorek says in an e-mail message, [20 June 1998], "He asked me if I could confirm the rumors that he has heard that nerve gas was used on Operation Tailwind."

**CNN ATTEMPTED TO CONVINCe A SOG VETERAN
NERVE GAS HAD BEEN USED
BUT DID NOT MENTION HIS DENIAL**

[E-mail Statement of Sgt. Ted Wicorek]

"April [Oliver] called three or four times before she reached me. In the beginning she was quite pleasant... the first thing she wanted to know about was the use of nerve gas. I told her that no nerve gas was used on Operation Tailwind. At this point she said she had high-ranking sources that confirmed that it was nerve gas.... I told her that there were absolutely no nerve gases used in Operation Tailwind. At this point the conversation deteriorated into a mental chess game.... She kept coming back to nerve gas and I noted that she was becoming irritated when I would not give in on this point. She indicated that she did not believe I was telling the truth...."

**CNN ATTEMPTED TO CONVINC MAJOR PLASTER
THAT POTENTIALLY LETHAL GAS HAD BEEN USED
BUT DID NOT MENTION HIS DENIAL**

[Statement of Major John Plaster, 21 June 1998]

"On two occasions during the fall of 1997, after the initial SOG piece had been aired on CNN, I was phoned by April Oliver. Each call was at least an hour in length. Among various (false) allegations she presented to me, she claimed that a SOG force had wiped out a "village" in Laos, killing women and children, and had employed an exotic gas — not CS — in some operations. I talked her through these assorted allegations, explaining to her in considerable detail why I thought these charges were not credible. No matter how many people she could get to confirm such charges — and she insisted she had already verified these things — that it would not turn a falsehood into a truth. At the end of the second conversation, she was very irritated with me. Despite being the single greatest repository for SOG documents, and my direct contact with hundreds of SOG veterans, she never contacted me to verify any facts or allegations."

EYEWITNESS EVIDENCE THAT NO LETHAL NERVE AGENT WAS USED

When the Tailwind commandos returned to the SOG helipad at Kontum — approximately 1.5 hours after the CS was used to extract them — Major Plaster, among other Green Berets, greeted them:

- The SOG commandos were wearing ordinary jungle fatigues, not chemical protective suits;
- Neither Americans nor Montagnards were suffering any visible symptoms of any kind of gas — even the CS effects had worn off;
- No one went through any kind of decontamination — they dropped gear in their team rooms, and while some went to a quick debrief, others gathered in the club to drink and share their war stories;
- Not one man that night cited any kind of poisonous gas, although it was commonly known that CS tear gas had been used to extract them
- Maj. Plaster heard not one man say anything about “Americans” or “defectors.”

SOURCE: Major Plaster's Book

As of the summer of 1997, CNN and April Oliver had a copy of Major Plaster's book, which includes a six-page description of Operation Tailwind. Oliver told Maj. Plaster she'd read it from cover to cover.

Maj. Plaster *does not cite* a village, women and children, nerve gas or American defectors. His account was based upon

- Declassified SOG documents
- Interviews with Chief SOG, Col. John Sadler, Col. Bobby Pinkerton, Lt. Col. Michael Radke, Staff Sergeant John Padgett and Spec. 5 Craig Schmidt
- A history of CIA operations in Laos
- And his own recollections.

Why Was There Minimal Enemy Resistance In the Camp?

NOTE: This enemy basecamp was not prepped with gas of any kind

- 1) Enemy forces were inexperienced, rear echelon supply and clerical troops
- 2) Attacking force was combat experienced SOG commandos, backed up by USAF fighters
- 3) North Vietnamese soldiers had fled into bomb shelters, NOT fighting bunkers. The shelters lacked firing ports, creating an ideal situation for employing hand grenades, which is exactly what the SOG commandos did. The NVA had never anticipated having to defend their camp from ground attack.

Why Was There Minimal Enemy Resistance In the Camp?

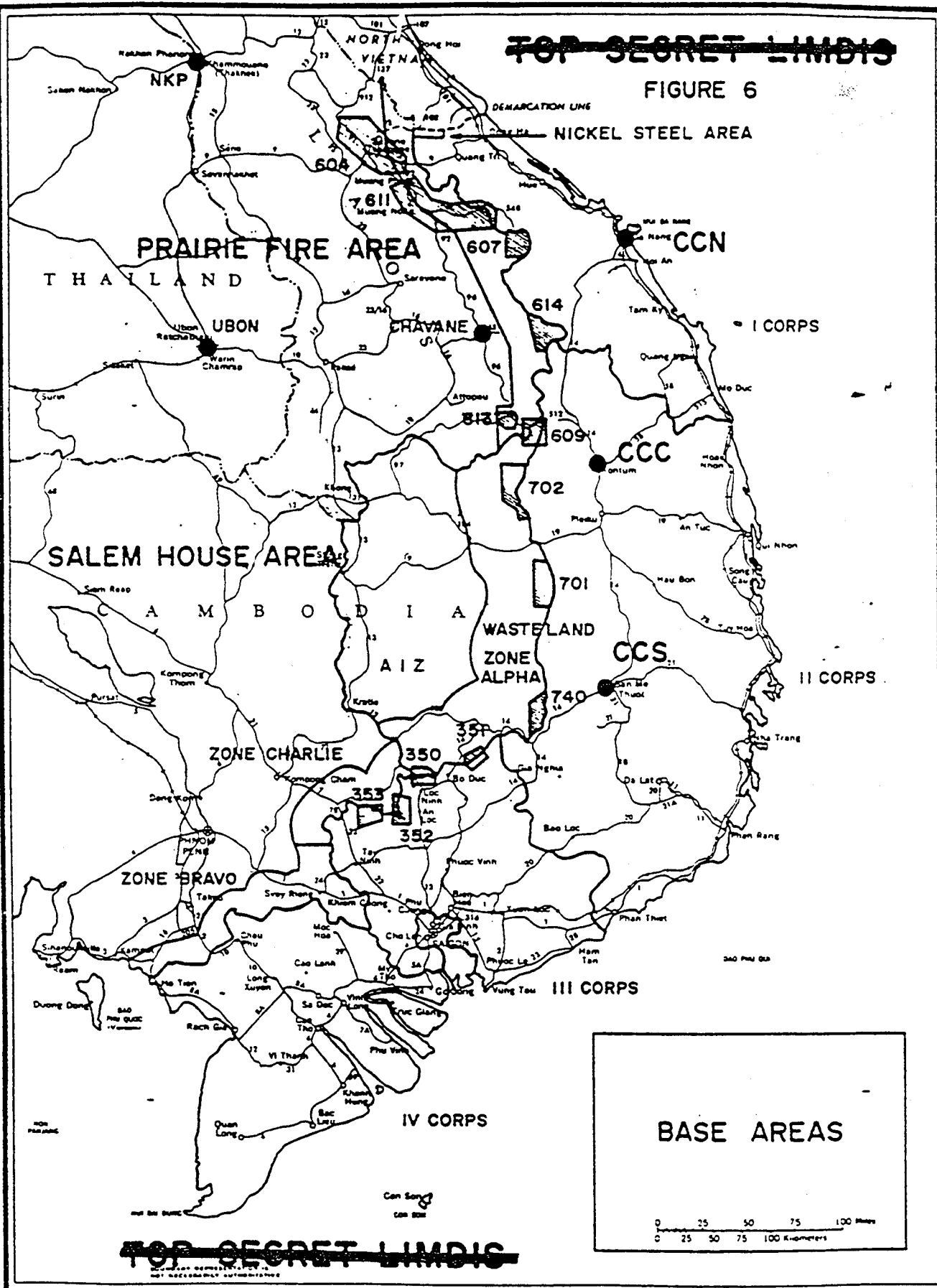
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~~TOP SECRET LINDIS~~

FIGURE 6

NICKEL STEEL AREA

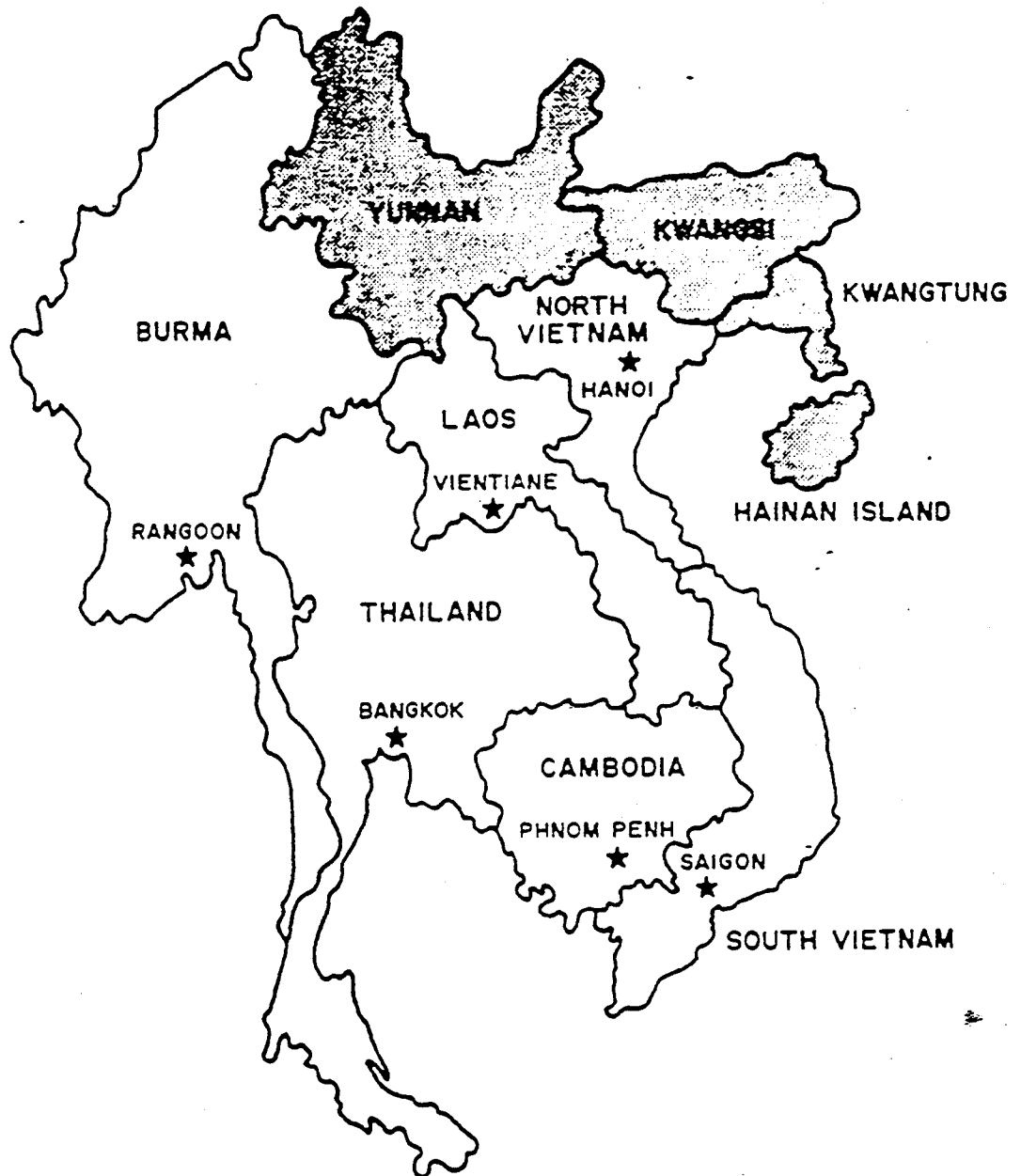


56873 9-67

~~SECRET~~

FIGURE 2

**JUWTF
AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY**



~~SECRET~~

TABLE 3. APPROXIMATE DURATION OF HAZARD IN CONTAMINATED TERRAIN

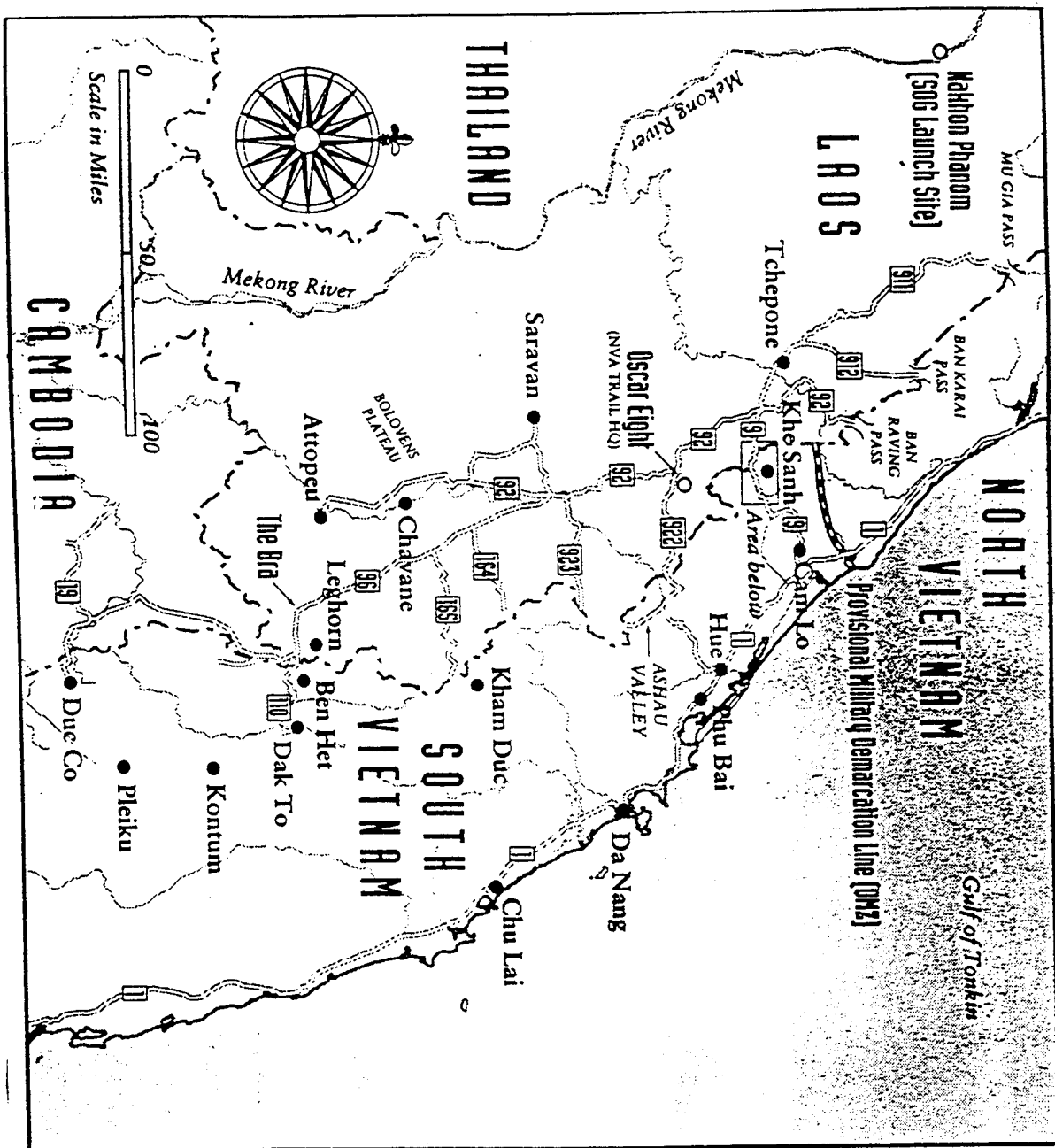
WARNING: This table is intended as a guide only. Chemical agent detectors must be used to determine the extent of actual contamination and vapor hazards.

TASK	TERRAIN	APPROX TIME AFTER CONTAMINATION THAT PRESCRIBED TASKS MAY BE PERFORMED WITH NEGLECTIBLE RISK ¹ (Not wearing protective clothing) ²							
		Blister Agent (Mustard)		Nerve Agent (V- or G-)					
		Temperature ³		Uniform ⁴					
		Warm (700-850°F)	Hot (850-1000°F)	Summer	Winter				
		WEARING MASKS							
TRAVERSAL ⁵ (Walking across area, 2 hr or less)	Bare soil or low vegetation. ⁶ High vegetation, including jungle and heavy woods.	36 hr	36 hr	5 hr	2 hr				
		4 days	2 days	28 hr	10 hr				
OCCUPATION (Without hitting ground, 24 hr)	Bare soil or low vegetation. ⁶ High vegetation, including jungle and heavy woods.	NOT WEARING MASKS ⁷							
		4 days	3 days	32 days	13 days				
		4 days	3 days	32 days	13 days				
		4 days	3 days	32 days	13 days				
OCCUPATION (Involving advance under fire, 24 hr)	High vegetation, including jungle and heavy woods.	6 days	4 days	50 days	18 days				

1. These times are safe-sided for troop safety.
2. Leather combat boots treated with protective dubbing or rubber combat boots are worn.
3. Effects of blister agent vary significantly with temperature. Mustard freezes in temperatures below 60°F and can present a hazard when the temperature rises.
4. Protection from V-agent and thickened G-agent varies significantly with layers of clothing worn.
5. For personnel walking for 2 hours in an area contaminated by blister agents, the limiting factor is the vapor hazard. If only a few minutes are required for traversal of the area, the task can be initiated at earlier times than those given.
6. Times shown are not applicable to sand, which will hold chemical agents for longer periods of time than those given.
7. The data refer to approximate times at which personnel could occupy contaminated areas without having to wear protective masks for protection against vapor hazard.

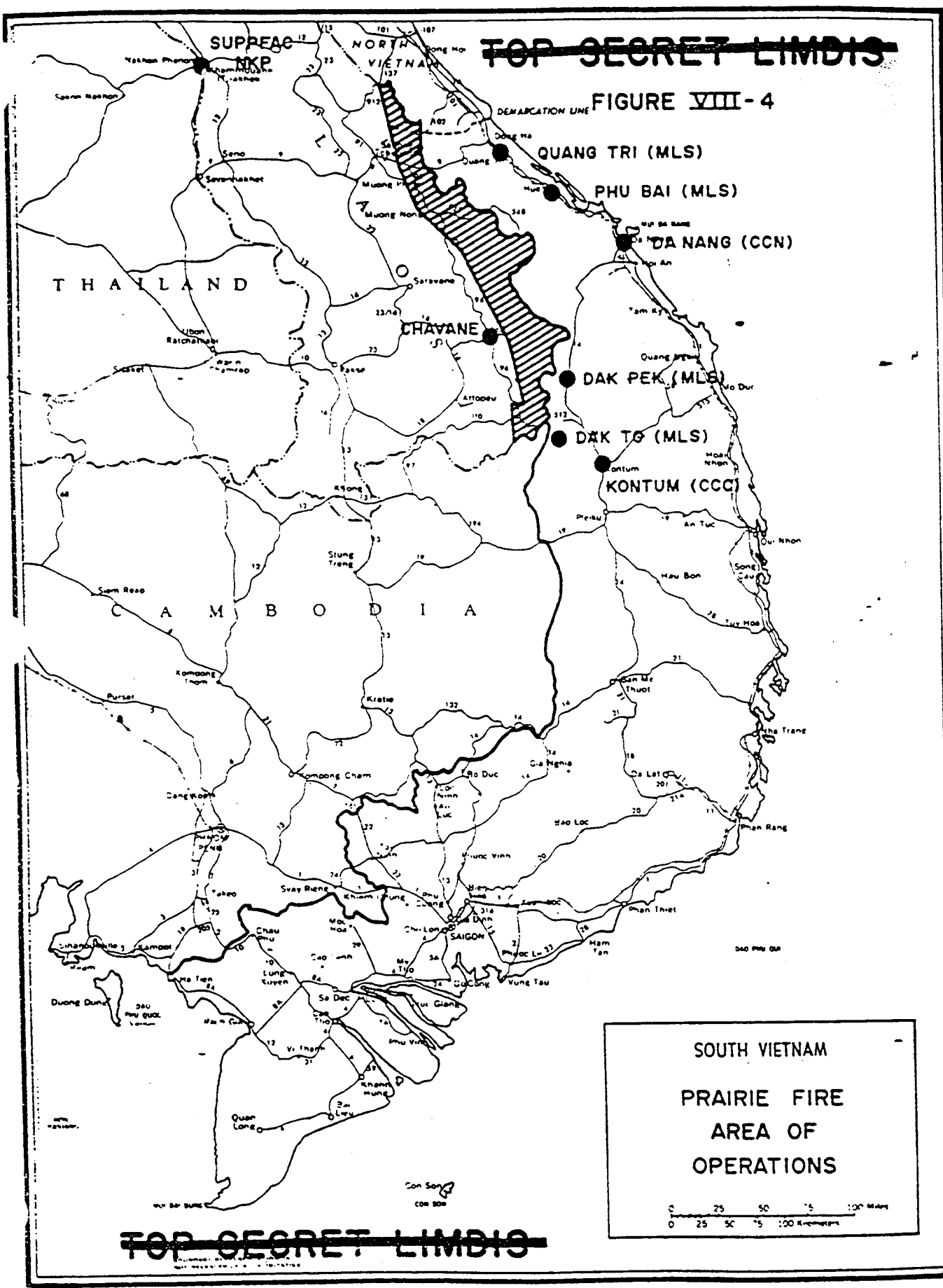
OTHERS RECOMMENDED FOR AN AWARD FOR THE SAME ACTION

1. CPT EUGENE C. McCALLEY JR., 239-46-9834 - SS
2. SGT GARY M. ROSE, 549-70-0726 - DSC
3. 1LT ROBERT L. VAN BUSKIRK, 224-58-2102 - SS
4. SGT MANUEL J. CROZCO, 527-72-3764 - SS
- ~~5. SP5 CRAIG D. SCHMIDT, 543-60-1312 - SS~~
6. SP5 JAMES D. LUCAS, 214-68-2691 - SS
7. MSG MORRIS N. ADAIR, 451-44-6520 - BS "V"
8. SFC JAMES L. BREVELLE, 457-40-5001 - BS "V"
9. SSG WILLIAM J. SCHEPHER, 054-36-1274 - BS "V"
10. 1LT PETER E. LONDON, 569-64-5545 - BS "V"
11. SFC DENVER G. MINTON, 270-30-3849 - BS "V"
12. SGT MICHAEL E. HAGEN, 545-86-8206 - BS "V"
13. SGT KEITH E. PLANCICH, 532-50-2990 - BS "V"
14. SFC BERGARD BRIGHT, 266-46-8766 - BS "V"
15. SGT DAVID L. YOUNG, 369-50-5139 - BS "V"
16. SGT DONALD J. BEAUDREAU, 018-42-7704 - BS "V"



~~TOP SECRET LIMDIS~~

FIGURE VIII-4



~~TOP SECRET LIMDIS~~

4
P
TAILWIND
~~TOP SECRET~~

2. In September, an operation on Route 966 on the western edge of the PFAO yielded 34 documents. Some 400 pages of these were evaluated by the MACV Combined Document Exploitation Center as Category A, containing significant intelligence. They were described by MACV J2 as "appearing to be the most significant collateral intelligence on the 599th Transportation Group since the beginning of the war."

3. A POW captured in October provided further information on the 559th Transportation Group, which has the highest intelligence collection priority in Laos. He was a former member of the D2 Engineer Battalion, Binh Tram (Military Station) 34, 559th Transportation Group, and provided information on the unit's OB, its training and tactics, and on the effects of allied interdiction efforts.

4. In November, another operation in Base Area 609 found and destroyed an estimated 40 tons of rice. The cache was in an area which has been extensively used by enemy units during the periodic attacks against 5th SFGA units at Dak Seang and Ben Het, and it is believed that the rice had been stored for use by units in similar future attacks.

(T) During 1970, fewer IIR's on enemy activity and terrain in the PFAO were prepared by the PF section due to revised criteria for the submission of terrain IIR's. Whereas such reports were previously written on each mission, they are now prepared only when held information is more than six months old, or when there is a discrepancy between current maps and the actual terrain.

(T) PF Intelligence Reports written and distributed during 1970 included:

1. 10 spot reports on enemy activity, provided to MACV J2 (CIIB).

2. 558 IIR's on enemy activity and terrain.

(T) Target selection and development included:

1. A total of 645 targets as compared to 864 targets in 1969.

2. Ten wiretap operations were conducted under the CIRCUS ACT program; seven were successful.

(T) A total of 436 missions were conducted during the year, as compared to 458 in 1969.

1. 540 trails were reported.

2. 39 active and inactive bivouac areas and way stations were reported.

B-II-6

1970 SOG HIST

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zone. The column was struck with 6 sorties of F-100's resulting in an estimated 100 enemy killed by air (KBA).

(T) On 25 April 1970, JCS authorized the expansion of tactical air strikes throughout Zone Alpha and on 29 April 1970 expanded the authority to use artillery and helicopter gunships in an offensive role. On 5 May 1970, JCS rescinded the requirement for close hold security on tactical airstrike reporting in Cambodia. Air strikes were then reported through normal SALEM HOUSE channels.

(T) On 27 May 1970, JCS authorized expansion of the tactical air strike authority to what is now known as the air interdiction zone (AIZ) through 30 June 1970. This authority was later extended to 1 May 1971.

Operation TAILWIND

(T) On 4 September 1970, CCC was alerted for the requirement to conduct a company sized operation in support of a operation near Chavane, Laos. Project nickname was "Operation TAILWIND." Following LZ preparation by TAC AIR and the insertion of a pathfinder team, CCC, Company B, was inserted about 20 km SE of Chavane at 1232 hours 11 September 1970. Four CH-53's were used for airlift and four AH1G Cobra's for gunship support. Small arms fire was received from southwest of the insertion LZ. All CH-53's and AH1G's received hits, but all aircraft were able to return to base.

(T) The company moved northwest 600 meters where they encountered a series of hootches used for the storage of 140mm rockets, 82mm mortar ammunition, 23mm AAA ammunition, B-40 rockets, small arms ammunition, and approximately 40 dismantled bicycles. Charges with delay fuses were placed on the 140mm rockets, and the company moved northwest 1,500 meters. The company counted 30 secondary explosions immediately following detonation and 75-100 during the following five hours.

(T) Later the company made contact with approximately 40 enemy. The engagement lasted an hour and tactical air strikes were employed. When the enemy broke contact, the company moved south where they began preparation of an LZ for the extraction of wounded. The LZ was completed when the company again came under attack from 140-150 enemy. Nine US were wounded in this encounter, but extraction of wounded was not possible due to adverse weather.

(T) Enemy contact continued throughout the night and fire support continued to be provided by Spectre (C-130) gunships. When enemy action decreased, the company moved to secure an LZ at a different location. A CH-53 helicopter attempted to land for medevac of wounded but was struck by numerous small arms and B-40 rocket rounds causing it to lose power and crash. The crew was successfully extracted by ladder. The company was directed to another LZ but weather prevented extraction.

R-VIII-7

~~TOP SECRET~~



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL
1600 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1600



JUL 16 1998

MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNDERSECRETARY OF DEFENSE
(PERSONNEL & READINESS)

SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL LAW CONCERNING CHEMICAL WEAPONS

During the Viet Nam War the United States was not a party to any treaty prohibiting the use of chemical weapons.

- The United States was never a party to the *Hague Declaration Concerning Asphyxiating Gases* of 29 July 1899 (which is now considered obsolete).
- President Nixon submitted the 1925 *Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare* (commonly known as the 1925 Geneva Gas Protocol) to the Senate for ratification on 11 August 1970, but it did not come into force for the United States until 10 April 1975.
- The *Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction* (commonly known as the Chemical Weapons Convention) was opened for signature in 1993 and was ratified by the United States in 1997.

Since World War II the United States has taken the position that the first use of lethal chemical weapons is contrary to customary international law. On this basis, from World War II until U.S. ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1997, the United States adhered to a "no-first-use" policy under which the United States would not resort to the use of lethal chemical weapons unless they were first used by our enemies. (See the attached extract from AFP 110-31, *International Law - The Conduct of Armed Conflict and Air Operations*. Published in 1976, it accurately states the US understanding of its law of war obligations during the Viet Nam War.)

David A. Koplow
Deputy General Counsel
(International Affairs)



19 November 1976

Judge Advocate General Activities

INTERNATIONAL LAW—THE CONDUCT OF
ARMED CONFLICT AND AIR OPERATIONS

This pamphlet is for the information and guidance of judge advocates and others particularly concerned with international law requirements applicable during armed conflict. It furnishes references and suggests solutions to a variety of legal problems but is not directive in nature. As an Air Force pamphlet, it does not promulgate official US Government policy although it does refer to US, DOD and Air Force policies.

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Chapter 5—Aerial Bombardment		
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DISTRIBUTION: F

between themselves according to the terms of this declaration.

(2) Convention On The Prohibition Of The Development, Production, And Stockpiling Of Bacteriological (Biological) And Toxin Weapons And On Their Destruction, 1972.

Article I. Each State Party to this Convention undertakes never in any circumstances to develop, produce, stockpile or otherwise acquire or retain: (1) Microbial or other biological agents, or toxins whatever their origin or method of production, of types and in quantities that have no justification for prophylactic, protective, or other peaceful purposes; (2) Weapons, equipment or means of delivery designed to use such agents or toxins for hostile purposes or in armed conflict.

Article II. Each State Party to this Convention undertakes to destroy, or to divert to peaceful purposes, as soon as possible, but not later than nine months after the entry into force of the Convention, all agents, toxins, weapons, equipment and means of delivery specified in Article I, which are in its possession or under its jurisdiction or control. In implementing the provisions of this article all necessary safety precautions shall be observed to protect populations and the environment.

Article III. Each State Party to this Convention undertakes not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever, directly or indirectly, and not in any way to assist, encourage, or induce any State, group of States, or international organizations to manufacture or otherwise acquire any of the agents, toxins, weapons, equipment, or means of delivery specified in Article I of the Convention.

Article IV. Each State Party to this Convention shall, in accordance with its constitutional processes, take any necessary measures to prohibit and prevent the development, production, stockpiling, acquisition or retention of the agents, toxins, weapons, equipment and

means of delivery specified in Article I of the Convention, within the territory of such state, under its jurisdiction or under its control anywhere.

b. **Biological Weapons.**⁹ International law prohibits biological weapons or methods of warfare whether they are directed against persons, animals or plants. The wholly indiscriminate and uncontrollable nature of biological weapons has resulted in the condemnation of biological weapons by the international community, and the practice of states in refraining from their use in warfare has confirmed this rule. The Biological Weapons Convention prohibits also the development, preparation, stockpiling and supply to others of such weapons.

c. **Chemical Weapons: Gas Warfare.** The first use of lethal chemical weapons is now regarded as unlawful in armed conflicts. During World War II President Roosevelt, in response to reports that the enemy was seriously contemplating the use of gas warfare, stated: "Use of such weapons has been outlawed by the general opinion of civilized mankind. . . . We shall under no circumstances resort to the use of such weapons unless they are first used by our enemies."¹¹ This United States position has been reaffirmed on many occasions by the United States as well as confirmed by resolutions in various international forums. On 11 August 1970, when the 1925 Geneva Protocol was resubmitted to the Senate for its advice and consent prior to United States ratification, President Nixon stated that the United States would ratify the Protocol with an appropriate reservation that "would permit the retaliatory use by the United States of chemical weapons and agents." The 1925 Geneva Protocol came into force for the United States on 10 April 1975.

d. **Anti-plant Agents.**¹³ Anti-plant agents are chemicals which possess a high potential for destroying plants. Thus, they can limit the production of food or defoliate vegetation used either as a raw material (trees for pulp) or as a cover (trees for camouflage). These agents include herbicides that kill or inhibit the growth of plants; plant growth

regulators that either regulate or inhibit plant growth, sometimes causing plant death; and those which dry up plant foliage. US policy on the use of herbicides in war is as follows:

The United States renounces, as a matter of national policy, first use of herbicides in war except use, under regulations applicable to their domestic use, for control of vegetation within US bases and installations or around their immediate defensive perimeters . . . The Secretary of Defense shall take all necessary measures to ensure that the use by the Armed Forces of any . . . chemical herbicides in war is prohibited unless such use has Presidential approval, in advance. (Executive Order 11850, 8 April 1975, issued by Gerald R. Ford, President of the United States).

The legal effect of this Executive Order is to reflect national policy. It is not intended to interpret the Geneva Protocol of 1925 or change the interpretation of the US that the Protocol does not restrain the use of chemical herbicides as such.

e. Riot Control Agents.¹⁴ Riot control agents are chemicals, such as sprays and gases, which do not cause permanent injury and have no harmful effects other than temporarily disabling the person to whom they are applied. US policy on the use of riot control agents in war is as follows:

The United States renounces, as a matter of national policy, . . . first use of riot control agents in war except in defensive military modes to save lives such as:

(a) Use of riot control agents in riot control situations in areas under direct and distinct US military control, to include controlling rioting prisoners of war.

(b) Use of riot control agents in situations in which civilians are used to mask or screen attacks and civilian casualties can be reduced or avoided.

(c) Use of riot control agents in rescue missions in remotely isolated

areas, of downed aircrews and passengers, and escaping prisoners.

(d) Use of riot control agents in rear echelon areas outside the zone of immediate combat to protect convoys from civil disturbances, terrorists and paramilitary organizations. . . .

The Secretary of Defense shall take all necessary measures to ensure that the use by the Armed Forces of the United States of any riot control agents. . . in war is prohibited unless such use has Presidential approval, in advance. (Executive Order No. 11850, 8 April 1975, issued by Gerald R. Ford, President of the United States).

The legal effect of this Executive Order is to reflect national policy. It is not intended to interpret the Geneva Protocol of 1925 or change the interpretation of the US that the Protocol does not restrain the use of riot control agents as such.

f. Poison.¹⁵ Article 23(a) of the Hague Regulations provides: "It is especially forbidden . . . To employ poison or poisoned weapons." Poisons are biological or chemical substances causing death or disability with permanent effects when, in even small quantities, they are ingested, enter the lungs or bloodstream, or touch the skin. The longstanding customary prohibition against poison is based on their uncontrolled character and the inevitability of death or permanent disability as well as on a traditional belief that it is treacherous to use poison.

6-5. Nuclear Weapons.¹⁶ The use of explosive nuclear weapons, whether by air, sea or land forces, cannot be regarded as violative of existing international law in the absence of any international rule of law restricting their employment. Nuclear weapons can be directed against military objectives as can conventional weapons. However, decisions to employ nuclear weapons emanate from a nation's highest level of government. The authority of United States forces to employ nuclear weapons resides solely with the President. Moreover, these weapons have



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15 July 1998

MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNDERSECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL
AND READINESS

SUBJECT: Allegations that U.S. Forces Used Lethal Gas to Kill Defectors

In support of your inquiry into Operation Tailwind, enclosed please find the following:

- (1) Summary of the results of my search of People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) publications, including titles and translations of selected extracts from three PAVN publications.
- (2) Talking points about:
 - the two known American defectors, and
 - three American servicemen who are frequent subjects of false stories about American defectors.
- (3) Background note concerning the question of possible foreign advisors to PAVN troops in the Operation Tailwind area of operations.

I hope this information proves helpful. Please contact me if you have questions.

3 Enclosures
as stated


ROBERT J. DESTATTE
Senior Analyst, Southeast Asia Division
Research & Analysis Directorate



SEARCH OF PEOPLE'S ARMY OF VIETNAM PUBLICATIONS
FOR INFORMATION ABOUT POSSIBLE USE OF CHEMICAL MUNITIONS

I reviewed the People's Army of Vietnam's (PAVN) official history of military operations on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the PAVN's official history of the 968th Volunteer Infantry Division, and the PAVN's official history of its Chemical Command (see below for titles and extracts).

KEY POINTS:

- These three official PAVN accounts make no mention of any possible use of lethal chemicals by American or allied forces during the war.
- The official PAVN history of its operations on the Ho Chi Minh trail makes no mention of any possible use of any type of lethal chemical weapons by American or allied forces during the war.
- The history of 968th Volunteer Infantry Division, the unit responsible for the defense of the area in which Operation Tailwind took place, makes no specific mention of any engagement in September 1970, nor any mention of the use of chemical agents by US and allied forces.
- The history of PAVN Chemical Command mentions American use of only defoliants, incendiary, and CS type chemical weapons in Laos.
- The history of the PAVN Chemical Command mentions that the PAVN's seizure of American chemical weapons (specifically CS grenades) and equipment (e.g., gas masks) and related documents during Operation Lam Son 719 in early 1971 in Laos contributed significantly to Hanoi's "political and diplomatic struggle." From this statement we might infer that Hanoi would have exploited any American attempt to employ lethal chemicals.
- Primary missions of PAVN chemical troops (history of the PAVN Chemical Command):
 - guidance to combat arms units on how to cope with chemicals the enemy employed
 - distribution of gas masks and other equipment for defense against chemicals
 - generate smoke in support of deception and concealment operations
 - flame thrower support to combat arms units
 - collect and exploit enemy chemical munitions and countermeasures equipment

DISCUSSION AND EXTRACT TRANSLATIONS:

I reviewed the following three books to see whether PAVN's official histories mention any possible use of lethal chemicals by US forces in Laos during the Vietnam war. I found no mention of lethal chemicals. I translated a few relevant passages that you might find useful.

1. *Van Tai Quan Su Chien Luoc Tren Duong Ho Chi Minh Trong Khang Chien Chong My*
[Strategic Military Transportation on the Ho Chi Minh Trail during the War of Resistance Against

America], written by Senior Colonel Nguyen Viet Phuong, Directorate of Rear Services, People's Army of Vietnam, 1st reprinting with revisions and additions, Hanoi, 1988.

pp. 337-358, contains descriptions of various bombs American forces employed in Laos, and PAVN countermeasures, and statistical charts depicting total numbers of bombs by type, year, and general location. No mention of any type of chemical weapon.

2. *Su Doan 968* [968th Division], published by the Culture and Information Office of the 968th Division, Quang Tri, 1990. The 968th Volunteer Infantry Division was responsible for defense of the Ho Chi Minh trail corridor in southern Laos, including the area in which Operation Tailwind took place.

pp. 60-90, contains descriptions of actions in the Saravane Province, Laos during 1970. The passage contains a relatively detailed account of actions during April-June 1970. The passage does not mention any engagement in September 1970. The only mention of American commando operations [i.e., MACVSOG] is a sentence on page 88 that notes during the 1970 rainy season we (the US) inserted 35 commando teams by helicopter in the regions bordering the Bolovens Plateau.

I found no mention of American or allied use of chemical agents in the PAVN history of the 968th Division.

3. *Lich Su Bo Doi Hoa Hoc, Tap I, 1958-1975, so thao* [History of the Chemical Command, Volume 1, 1958-1975, draft], written by Le Huong and Dang Xuan Khoi and revised by Nguyen Thanh Huu, published by the Headquarters of the Chemical Command, People's Army of Vietnam, Hanoi, 1988. Chapter 2, pp. 167-240, covers the activities of the PAVN Chemical Command in B4 Front (southern Quang Tri Province and Thua Thien Province, South Vietnam), and B5 Front (demilitarized zone, northern Quang Tri Province, and the Highway 9 corridor), and southern Laos.

p. 198. The history of the PAVN Chemical Command devotes a total of two short paragraphs to events during 1970. Only one of these two paragraphs is devoted to events in Laos: "In May 1970, the 91st [Chemical] Company was attached to the 141st Regiment, 312th Infantry Division in Laos. The company was organized into three cells that accompanied the 2nd and 3rd Battalions and the 19th Company which fought a number of engagements at Phou Nha Thau and Phou Then [Plain of Jars area], but their effectiveness was low because the terrain did not permit the flame throwers to be used to their full potential."

p. 202 [Feb-Mar 1971]. "With regard to chemicals, the tactical operations plan of Major General Hoang Xuan Lam, the commander of the [RVNAF] operation, directed the use of various chemical weapons (CBU 19 bombs, BLU 52A and BLU 52B 70mm chemical rockets). One hundred percent of enemy forces were equipped with gas masks before the operation, each man was equipped with 1-2 CS smoke or powder grenades; the basic load for each M19 gun included 6-12 CS rounds; each company had 3-4 type E8 CS canister launchers; and, additionally, they still had the 40mm CS launch tubes."

p. 203 [Feb-Mar 1971]. "The enemy carried out 15 chemical attacks on our positions on high points 311, 351, 402, 229, 863, and 684; four attacks on our artillery positions; 14 attacks on our troop bivouac areas, command posts, supply points, artillery observer posts, etc..., but the chemical troops deployed with our units dealt with chemical contingencies calmly and quickly, insuring our troops could fight continuously for a protracted period."

"Chemical contingencies were discovered through reconnaissance and the effects were overcome immediately, giving our troops confidence. In the various units, the seizure of enemy documents and chemical equipment was of great significance for technical research and training, and for the political and DIPLOMATIC struggle [emphasis added]. We seized 187 gas masks, three CS dispensers (E8), one 40mm CS launch tube, 11 XM25 grenades, 62 XM54 grenades, and two enemy documents that spoke about our chemical equipment."

TALKING POINTS ON DEFECTORS DURING THE VIETNAM WAR

QUESTION: "How many U.S. military personnel defected to communist forces in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam conflict, 1963-1975?"

ANSWER: Only two American military personnel were known to have defected to Communist forces during the war. (See below for names and details.)

QUESTION: "During the war there were reports of a so-called 'salt-and-pepper' team operating with Communist forces. What is the basis for these reports?"

ANSWER: Some reports of Americans operating with Communist forces no doubt are based on sightings of USMC Private Robert R. Garwood, one of the two American military personnel who were known to have defected to communist forces. There is circumstantial evidence that Robert R. Garwood armed with an AK 47 assault rifle occasionally accompanied PAVN troops in the field. Robert R. Garwood and US Army Private Mckinley are the only Americans who are known to have operated with Communist forces during the war.

QUESTION: Is it possible Russian advisors might have been working with People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) forces in the Operation Tailwind area of operations, and members of the MACVSOG force might have mistook the Russians for American defectors.

ANSWER: We have seen no evidence that could support a belief that Russians or other Western advisors (e.g., Cubans) served with PAVN forces in the Operation Tailwind area of operations.

DEFECTOR MCKINLEY NOLAN (Case 9950)

Private Mckinley Nolan, U. S. Army, was dropped from the rolls as a deserter when he failed to return to his unit after he was released from the Long Binh Military Stockade on 8 November 1967. Taking along his common-law Vietnamese-Khmer wife and her two children, Nolan defected to the National Liberation Front (NLF). He and his wife resided with Vietnamese Communist forces at various locations along both sides of the border between Cambodia and northern Tay Ninh Province, South Vietnam, until approximately November 1973.

In approximately November 1973, Nolan and his family left the Vietnamese and joined Khmer Rouge forces. They lived with Khmer Rouge forces in the vicinity of Memot town until at least mid-1974. Several sources report that Khmer Rouge forces killed Nolan. Although separate sources report different dates, the Khmer Rouge killed Nolan apparently sometime between late 1974 and mid-1975.

DEFECTOR ROBERT R. GARWOOD (Case 0155)

Private Robert R. Garwood, USMC, disappeared from his unit near Danang City, South Vietnam, on 28 September 1965. Survivors of the Communist B.1 Front POW camp (also known as the Military Region 5 POW camp), located in northwestern Quang Ngai Province, South Vietnam, reported that Garwood lived with the cadre in the camp—not with the POWs—and had complete freedom of movement. Communist authorities offered Garwood release in May 1967; however, he declined to accept release stating that he wanted to stay with Communist forces and assist them in their cause for freedom. In the autumn of 1969, Garwood moved to North Vietnam, where he lived until he returned to the United States in March 1979.

Several hundred former officers of the Republic of Vietnam armed forces who were detained in Communist re-education camps in North Vietnam after the war and later immigrated to the United States, told American officials they encountered Garwood as a member of the staff of the re-education camps near Yen Bai Town, about 80 kilometers northwest of Hanoi, between mid-1976 and the autumn of 1978.

After he returned to the U.S., Garwood was tried by a military courts martial and found guilty of collaborating with the enemy and having assaulted an American POW.

SALT-AND-PEPPER TEAM:

The stories of a so-called "salt-and-pepper" team illustrates how persons who exploit the POW/MIA issue defame American servicemen who died in Vietnam, and defame the families of those servicemen.

- USMC Privates Robert L. Greer and Fred T. Schreckengost have been targets of this story
- These two Marines disappeared on 7 Jun 1964
- Both are Caucasian
- They rented motorbikes to tour an area near Danang City during off-duty time
- Credible reports of capture and death received shortly after they disappeared
- Their motorbikes were found submerged in a canal not long after incident
- In 1990 specialists from PACOM's Joint Task Force-Full Accounting investigated
- Witnesses led JTF-FA team to burial site, remains recovered in Nov 1990
- Suggestions these two Marines were defectors unjustly defames them and their families

USMC PRIVATE EARL CLYDE WEATHERMAN

- USMC Private Earl Clyde Weatherman is a frequent target of false stories about defectors
- Pvt Weatherman disappeared after he escaped from a brig near Danang City on 8 Nov 1967
- Sometime after he escaped from the brig Communist forces captured him
- He was confined with other Americans in mountains of northeast Quang Ngai Province
- Seizing an opportunity, he and another USMC prisoner assaulted a guard, took his weapon, and escaped.
- The two escaped men traveled about two kilometers before pursuers caught them.
- The other escaped prisoner witnessed pursuers kill Private Weatherman.
- In 1994 Vietnamese witnesses led American investigators to the site where they buried Private Weatherman.
- Although Private Weatherman might have encountered disciplinary problems before he was captured, he acted heroically after becoming a prisoner. He resisted his captors and tried to escape when he saw an opportunity.
- Suggestions Private Weatherman was a defector unjustly defames him and his family.

BACKGROUND NOTE RE FOREIGN ADVISORS TO PAVN

One of the questions the CNN/TIME story about Operation Tailwind suggests is the question of whether Russian or other Soviet bloc advisors might have been working with People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) forces in the Operation Tailwind area of operations, and whether members of the MACVSOG force might have mistook those advisors for American defectors.

We have seen no evidence that could support a belief that Russians or other Soviet bloc advisors (e.g., Cubans) served with PAVN forces in the Operation Tailwind area of operations. In fact, available information about the PAVN's operations suggests strongly that Russian and other Soviet bloc advisors did not operate in the Operation Tailwind area of operations.

Several sources of knowledge give us insight into PAVN's wartime operations.

First, in the course of their in-country investigations and oral history interviews to search for information about the fate of American servicemen who remain unaccounted for from the war, the PACOM's Joint Task Force-Full Accounting (JTF-FA) and its predecessor, the Joint Casualty Resolution Center, have interviewed hundreds of PAVN veterans.

Second, in recent years the Defense Prisoner of War and Missing Personnel Affairs Office's (DPMO) Joint Commission Support Directorate has interviewed several Soviet veterans who served as military advisors in Vietnam.

Third, specialists in the JTF-FA and DPMO have reviewed hundreds of official histories that PAVN published about the war.

Fourth, wartime intelligence American and allied forces gathered from prisoners, ralliers, captured documents, signal intercepts, etc.

The preponderance of information gathered from these four sources reveals that Soviet military advisors seldom ventured south of the coastal town of Vinh, located in Nghe An Province in northern Vietnam, about midway between Hanoi and the old demilitarized zone. To the best of our knowledge, the few Soviet bloc military advisors that ventured south of Vinh were advisors to PAVN air defense units. With two possible exceptions, to the best of our knowledge, Soviet bloc military advisors did not venture outside of northern Vietnam.

The first possible exception would have occurred during the early 1960s when the PAVN used fixed wing and rotary wing aircraft to move personnel and supplies into a few sites in northeastern and central Laos. Soviet bloc pilots and aircrews might have participated in some of those flights.

The other possible exception would have occurred during PAVN's defensive campaign against Operation Lam Son 719 in Laos, in about February-April 1971. This was an American supported offensive by Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces' (RVNAF) along the Highway 9 corridor between the Vietnamese border outpost at Khe Sanh and the Laotian town of Tchepone. One former Soviet advisor to a PAVN air defense regiment told American interviewers that he and other members of his small advisor team believed they might have ventured a short distance into an area of Laos located between the Ban Karai Pass and the town of Tchepone for a brief period in early 1971.

Toward the end of the war, Cuba sent a small group of construction engineers to Vietnam to help with road building projects; however, this was long after Operation Tailwind. During the war Cuba also posted a diplomatic representative to the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam, which was located in Cambodia. It is unlikely any Cubans ever ventured into Laos in support of or as advisors to the PAVN.

OPERATION TAILWIND

SIR, I AM LT VAN BUSKIRK FROM MACSOG CCC AT KONTUM. I WAS A PLATOON LEADER DURING OPERATION TAILWIND WHICH ENTERED TARGET AREA TANGO 2 EIGHTEEN KILOMETERS ^{EAST} ~~EACH~~ OF CHAVANE ON 111245Z SEP 70. THE FORCE COMMITTED WAS 16 US AND 120 SCU. OUR MISSION WAS TO CONDUCT A RECONNAISSANCE IN FORCE TO COLLECT INFORMATION AND INTELLIGENCE, AND TO CREATE A DIVERSION IN SUPPORT OF, AND IN CONSONANCE WITH, THE CAS LAUNCHED OPERATION GAUNTLET.

TWENTY MINUTES AFTER A 12 MAN PATHFINDER TEAM WAS DELIVERED TO THE LZ BY 2 UH-1 HELICOPTERS, THE MAIN BODY WAS LANDED BY 3 CH-53 HELICOPTERS AT (POINT 1). THERE WAS NO ENEMY FIRE RECEIVED BY THE PATHFINDER SHIPS, HOWEVER, THE FIRST CH-53 RECEIVED SMALL ARMS FIRE APPROXIMATELY 5 MINUTES FROM THE LZ. TWO SCU AND THE FIRST PLATOON SERGEANT REPORTED SEEING, FROM THE WINDOW OF THE AIRCRAFT JUST PRIOR TO LANDING, 3 RUSSIAN MEDIUM TANKS AND TWO 2 1/2 TON TRUCKS MOVING NE ON ROUTE 965. THE LZ AND SURROUNDING AREAS HAD BEEN PREPPED WITH "ROCK-EYE" ARMOR-PIERCING, CLUSTER BOMB UNITS. ALL THE CH-53 AIRCRAFT RECEIVED MINOR HITS FROM SMALL ARMS FIRE, BUT DUE POSSIBLE TO THE LZ PREP, ENEMY ANTI-AIRCRAFT WAS NOT OBSERVED FROM THESE POSITIONS KNOWN TO BE IN THE GENERAL AREA.

THE COMPANY MOVED APPROXIMATELY 600 METERS TO THE NW WHEN THE 1ST PLATOON POINT SQUAD LOCATED AN ENEMY HUT AT POINT 2 WHICH CONTAINED OVER TWO HUNDRED 140 MM ROCKETS (POINT 2). TWO SQUADS FROM THE 1ST PLATOON DEPLOYED AND SEARCHED THE AREA, LOCATING A TOTAL OF 3 HUTS CONTAINING:

1. FIVE HUNDRED 140 MM ROCKETS * (START SLIDES) (SLIDE TWO)
2. THREE HUNDRED 5-40 ROCKETS

3. 12,500 ROUNDS OF SMALL ARMS AMMO.
4. APPROXIMATELY 40 BICYCLES.
5. THREE HUNDRED 83 MM MORTAR ROUNDS (SLIDE ONE)
6. TWO THOUSAND 23 MM ANTI-AIRCRAFT SHELLS (SLIDE ONE)

DURING THIS PERIOD THE ENEMY COULD BE HEARD FIRING SIGNAL SHOTS THROUGHOUT THE AREA AND AT ONE TIME A FIELD PHONE WAS HEARD RINGING. THE TWO SQUADS BROUGHT SAMPLES FROM EACH STRUCTURE FOR PHOTOGRAPHING AND IDENTIFICATION. THE DEMOLITION EXPERTS SET AN EXPLOSIVE CHARGE WITH A 13 1/3 MINUTE DELAY FUZE IN EACH OF THE TWO LARGEST STRUCTURES CONTAINING THE 140 MM ROCKETS AND PLACED A WHITE PHOSPHOROUS GRENADE ON EACH CHARGE TO MARK THE LOCATION FOR THE FAC. THE COMPANY MOVED NORTH AT 1500 HOURS AND 14 MINUTES LATER TWO LARGE EXPLOSIONS WERE HEARD. SECONDARY EXPLOSIONS WERE HEARD FOR THE NEXT FIVE HOURS. THE FAC REPORTED SEEING THE SMOKE FROM THE WHITE PHOSPHOROUS GRENADES AND MARKED THE LOCATION FOR A BOMB STRIKE.

THE COMPANY WAS ENGAGED BY ENEMY FORCES WHICH WERE BY PASSED AT (POINT 3) AND CONTINUED NW TO A RON SITE AT (POINT 4). NO ENEMY CONTACT WAS MADE DURING THE NIGHT. AS THE COMPANY WAS PREPARING TO MOVE TO THE ROAD THE MORNING OF D + 1 TWO TRACKED VEHICLES, POSSIBLY THE TANKS MENTIONED EARLIER, WERE HEARD MOVING VERY SLOWLY FROM NORTH TO SOUTH ON ROUTE 966. THE COMPANY ATTEMPTED TO DESTROY THE TRACKED VEHICLES WITH LIGHT ANTI-TANK WEAPONS, HOWEVER, THE TERRAIN BETWEEN THE COMPANY'S LOCATION AND THE ROAD WAS A SWAMP WHICH PRECLUDED DIRECT OBSERVATION.

AT POINT 5 AN ESTIMATED 40 ENEMY SOLDIERS INITIATED CONTACT WITH THE LEAD ELEMENT. THE ENEMY FIRED AM WEAPONS, RIFLE GRENADES, 8-40 ROCKETS AND A MORTAR. TWO SQUADS DEPLOYED FROM THE 1ST PLATOON AND MANEUVERED AGAINST THE ENEMY. TAC AIR, ARMED WITH CRU-25 WAS EXPENDED AGAINST THE ENEMY'S POSITION. THIS ENGAGEMENT LASTED OVER ONE HOUR. THE COMPANY MOVED 500 METERS SE TO A LARGE BOMB CRATER TO PREPARE

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THE SPECTRE AIRCRAFT WAS UNABLE TO READ THE SIGNALS FROM THE COMPANIES TRANS-ONDERS OR MINI-PONDERS. THE PILOT STATED HIS EQUIPMENT WAS OLD, AND HE ADJUSTED HIS A/C FIRE CONTINUOUSLY FROM THE FLASHES OF B-40 ROCKETS. EXPLODING HAND GRENADES AND TRIP FLARES THAT THE COMPANY REPORTED TO HIM. THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT OF D + 1, 1ST AND 3RD PLATOON MEMBERS COULD HEAR THE ENEMY CRY OUT, GROAN, MOAN, AND OTHER SOUNDS OF PAIN. THEY COULD HEAR MANY HEAVY OBJECTS BEING DRAWN AWAY WITHIN 5 METERS OF THEIR POSITIONS. AFTER THE A/C WOULD FIRE, THEY COULD HEAR THE ENEMY RUN AND BANG INTO TREES AS THEY FLED IN PANIC; THEY COULD HEAR SOME CRY OUT AS THEY DIED. SHORTLY THEREAFTER, THEY COULD HEAR THE SOUND OF HEAVY OBJECTS AGAIN BEING DRAWN AWAY FROM THEIR POSITIONS, THEN MORE ENEMY SIGNALS AND INCOMING GRENADES. THE COMPANY ESTIMATED THE AIRCRAFT AS HAVING KILLED A MINIMUM OF 67 ENEMY THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT. ON D + 2, 13 SEP, THE COMPANY WAS DIRECTED TO MOVE TO A NEW LZ FOR EXTRACTION OF THE TWO SERIOUSLY WOUNDED PERSONNEL. DURING THIS MOVEMENT AN ENEMY SQUAD WAS OBSERVED MOVING TO OCCUPY THE 3RD PLATOON'S FOXHOLES FROM THE PREVIOUS NIGHT. 1ST PLATOON INITIATED CONTACT AND HELD THE ENEMY SO THE COMPANY COULD BY-PASS THEM WITH THE WOUNDED. ANOTHER ENEMY SQUAD REINFORCED THE FIRST, AND 3 US PERSONNEL AND ONE SUC, MAINTAINED CONTACT UNTIL THEY COULD BRING TAC AIR TO DESTROY THE ENEMY SQUADS. THE TAC AIR WAS SUCCESSFUL ON THE 1ST ENEMY SQUAD AND KILLED APPROXIMATELY HALF OF THE OTHER SQUAD. THE 4 MEN REJOINED THE COMPANY ON THE WAY TO THE LZ. JUST AFTER ARRIVING AT POINT 8 AN ENEMY SQUAD AGAIN INITIATED CONTACT. CBU-25 WAS USED AGAINST THE ENEMY BY TAC AIR. * THE COMPANY SECURED THE LZ AT POINT 9 AND CLEARED TREES AND STUMPS WITH CLAYMORE MINES AND OTHER EXPLOSIVES. AT 1255 A CH-53 ARRIVED TO REMOVE THE SERIOUSLY WOUNDED, HOWEVER, THE AIRCRAFT COULD NOT LAND DUE TO A TAIL ROTOR BLADE STRIKING A TREE (SHOW BLANK SLIDE).

THIS SHIP LATER CRASHED 3 KILOMETERS TO THE NE AT POINT 10 AFTER IT WAS HIT BY A S-40 ROCKET. ALL PERSONNEL WERE RESCUED BY A CHASE SHIP. DURING THIS RESCUE ACTION EIGHT ENEMY WERE KILLED BY AIR. THE COMPANY WAS DIRECTED TO ANOTHER LZ FOR EVACUATION OF WOUNDED. THE COMPANY HAD TRAVELED APPROXIMATELY 350 METERS WHEN MORE THAN TWO ENEMY SQUADS INITIATED CONTACT AT POINT 11. THE FIRST PLATOON ENGAGED THE ENEMY WITH TWO SQUADS AND DIRECTED A SUCCESSFUL TAC AIR STRIKE WITH CGU-25 ON THE ENEMY POSITION. THE COMPANY ARRIVED AT THE LZ LOCATION AT 1400 HOURS (POINT 12). THE FIRST PLATOON LINKED BACK UP WITH THE COMPANY AND DEPLOYED INTO A REAR AMBUSH FORMATION. TAC AIR WAS DIRECTED THROUGHOUT THE AREAS WHERE EARLIER CONTACT HAD OCCURRED. THE ENEMY DID NOT MAKE CONTACT WITH THE COMPANY AGAIN UNTIL THE FOLLOWING DAY. WHEN BAD WEATHER PREVENTED EVACUATION OF WOUNDED, THE COMPANY SET UP A DEFENSIVE PERIMETER AT POINT 13. THE COMPANY BEGAN MOVEMENT TO ANOTHER LZ AT DAYBREAK. THE COMPANY WAS OUT OF WATER, HAD USED MORE THAN HALF OF THEIR BASIC LOAD OF AMMUNITION; MOST OF THE US WERE WOUNDED, SOME TWICE, AND MANY SCU WERE WOUNDED, HOWEVER, ONLY 4 SERIOUSLY. THE MORALE OF THE COMPANY WAS EXTREMELY HIGH DUE TO THE SUCCESS OF THEIR CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY THUS FAR.

APPROXIMATELY 200 METERS FROM THE RON SITE, THE UNIT RECEIVED FIRE FROM A S-40 ROCKET AT POINT 14, AUTOMATIC WEAPONS, AND HAND GRENADES. THE ENEMY WAS ONLY 20 METERS AWAY.

TWO SQUADS DEPLOYED ON LINE FACING THE ENEMY AND RETURNED WHAT SOON BECAME SPORATIC FIRE. THE PLATOON LEADER COULD HEAR THE ENEMY TALKING AMONG THEMSELVES, BUT NEITHER ONE OF HIS INTERPRETERS COULD TRANSLATE WHAT THEY THINK TO BE A LAOTIAN DIALECT. THE PLATOON LEADER CALLED OUT TO THE ENEMY IN ENGLISH TO "CHOI HAU" AND HIS INTERPRETER CALLED OUT IN VIETNAMESE, BUT EACH TIME THEY CALLED OUT THEIR POSITION WOULD COME UNDER MORE AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FIRE.

THE COMPANY COULD HAVE BY-PASSED THE ENEMY, HOWEVER, THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME THE ENEMY HAD INITIATED DIRECT FRONTAL CONTACT. BECAUSE OF THIS SITUATION WE BELIEVED THE ENEMY WAS TRYING TO PROTECT A VALUABLE LOCATION. WE REQUESTED PERMISSION FROM THE COMPANY COMMANDER TO ASSAULT THE POSITION. THE COMPANY COMMANDER APPROVED AND TWO SQUADS, YELLING, SCREAMING, AND FIRING THEIR WEAPONS ASSAULTED THE ENEMY POSITION.

SOME OF THE ENEMY RETURNED FIRE AND OTHERS BROKE AND RAN. THE TWO SQUADS KILLED THOSE REMAINING AND DROVE MANY INTO A BN SIZE BASE CAMP (POINT 15). THE ASSAULT CONTINUED AND THE ENEMY BROKE INTO THREE DIRECTIONS. THE RESERVE SQUAD ENGAGED THOSE THAT WERE FLEEING IN THEIR DIRECTION. DUE TO THE CANOPY THINNING OUT, THE BASE CAMP WAS MARKED WITH A WHITE PHOSPHOROUS GRENADE AND TAC AIR WAS BROUGHT TO BEAR ON THE ENEMY SOLDIERS FLEEING TO THE FRONT AND THE RIGHT FLANK. THE ENEMY WHO REMAINED IN THE CENTER OF THE BASE CAMP TOOK UP POSITIONS IN HUTS WHICH WERE ASSAULTED AND DESTROYED. THE FIRST PLATOON KILLED A CONFIRMED 54 ENEMY IN HUTS, BUNKERS AND SPIDER HOLES, AND THE 2ND PLATOON KILLED 17 ENEMY ON THE LEFT FLANK. TAC AIR KILLED AN ESTIMATED 25 FLEEING ENEMY SOLDIERS. AFTER THE BASE CAMP WAS SECURED, PHOTOGRAPHS WERE TAKEN AND MANY VALUABLE INTELLIGENCE DOCUMENTS WERE GATHERED AND ALL LIVESTOCK ^{was} KILLED. THREE ENEMY REFUSED TO SURRENDER AND ONE BROKE AND RAN WHEN AN ENEMY AUTOMATIC WEAPON FIRED ON THE SQUAD'S POSITION. ALL WERE KILLED. SQUAD LEADERS ATTEMPTED TO DRAG SOME BODIES OUTSIDE THE HUTS FOR FURTHER IDENTIFICATION, HOWEVER, THEY WERE UNABLE TO DO SO BECAUSE THE BODIES WERE SPREAD ALL OVER THE FLOORS AND WALLS. INTELLIGENCE MATERIAL WAS REMOVED FROM SLEEPING HOOTCHES, PASSED TO THE COMPANY COMMANDER AND THE ASSAULT CONTINUED. THE FIRST PLATOON TOOK NO CASUALTIES DURING THIS ASSAULT, AND THE SECOND PLATOON HAD ONLY ONE SCU WOUNDED. AT THIS POINT, B COMPANY CONSIDERED THEIR SITUATION CRITICAL AND REQUESTED EXTRACTION. AS THE FIRST HELICOPTER ARRIVED AT POINT 16, IT RECEIVED GROUND FIRE FROM A LONG HILL

TO THE NW AND SW. THE COMPANY SUPPRESSED THE GROUND FIRE WITH ORGANIC WEAPONS AND REMAINING AMMUNITION. THE FIRST TWO CH-53'S WERE ABLE TO LIFT OFF THE LZ WITH ONLY MINOR DAMAGE POSSIBLY DUE TO CBU-19 BEING USED TO PREP THE AREA. THE THIRD SHIP APPARENTLY SUSTAINED DAMAGE WHICH CAUSED IT TO CRASH 15 KILOMETERS EAST OF THE LZ. FIVE ENEMY SOLDIERS WHO HAD CRAWLED BACK UP THE HILL AND WERE ON THE LZ WERE KILLED BY PERSONNEL AS THEY BOARDED THE AIRCRAFT. ONE SCU WAS FATALLY WOUNDED AS HE ENTERED THE AIRCRAFT AND ANOTHER SCU WAS KILLED WHEN THE AIRCRAFT CRASHED. A CHASE SHIP SUCCESSFULLY RESCUED THE PASSENGERS AND PROCEEDED TO KONTUM ON 141500 SEP 70.

THE INFORMATION I HAVE JUST PRESENTED WAS OBTAINED BY A COMPLETE INTERROGATION OF EVERY US AND SCU MEMBER OF THE COMPANY IMMEDIATELY UPON RETURN TO CCC. AS A PLATOON LEADER ON THIS OPERATION, I AM MOST PROUD OF MY OWN US AND SCU PERSONNEL AND OF THE ENTIRE COMPANY. WE FEEL WE DID A GOOD JOB. THE PERSONNEL WERE AGGRESSIVE AND EFFECTIVE. WE CANNOT SAY TOO MANY GOOD THINGS ABOUT THE AIR SUPPORT WE RECEIVED. THEY WERE MAGNIFICENT. WITHOUT THEM OUR JOB WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE. SIP, COLONEL SAGLER WOULD LIKE TO PRESENT A FINAL WRAP UP ON OPERATION TAIL WIND.

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SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW OF ROBERT L. VAN BUSKIRK
JULY 14, 1998

Mr. Van Buskirk was contacted by Henry J. Schweiter, OASD/RA, by phone on the afternoon of July 14, 1998. He indicated no one from the government had contacted him before and that while he would be happy to talk to anyone about Tailwind, he would only answer questions about the use of Sarin gas and the sighting of possible defectors if those questions were submitted in advance in writing.

In describing Operation Tailwind, Mr. Van Buskirk stated that he believed the operation had been compromised before it began and was a trap. "How could we put two, six-man pathfinder teams on the LZ for 18 minutes with 'all clear', and yet I had 10 percent wounded before we hit the ground? The enemy knew when and where we were coming, and we were completely surrounded." All the helicopters were hit on the way in. He stated that they only got off the LZ because of firepower from the sky. As confirmation, Mr. Van Buskirk referred to the first CNN report, which quoted Major General Jack Singlaub as saying that the SOG forces were "bait".

Mr. Van Buskirk stated that all fourteen living American participants from Operation Tailwind have been located. He said that Sergeant William Scherer and Sergeant Keith Plancich were dead. He mentioned that Gary Matsumoto, a military expert and reporter from Fox News, had succeeded in locating most of the participants.

Mr. Van Buskirk said that the account of Operation Tailwind in the book on SOG forces by retired Army Major John L. Plaster was highly inaccurate. He said that Plaster was "out to lunch" and that "he was handing out beer as we came out of the helos after the operation was over." He said that the SOG forces on Tailwind did not march 15 miles cross-country, as Plaster claims in his book. "We didn't go 10 football fields from the LZ", Mr. Van Buskirk said. "They stomped us for four days. It ain't the way Plaster wrote it."

The amazing thing about Tailwind was that Mr. Van Buskirk got all 55 men under his command out alive. He said that from his perspective, his job was to "blow stuff up and keep my men alive." He said that for four days he fired his weapon so often that it took the skin off his trigger finger.

Mr. Van Buskirk specifically addressed the case of Sergeant Michael Hagen, one of his men on Operation Tailwind who is living in poverty with his parents in Los Angeles, California and is paralyzed from the knees down. According to Mr. Van Buskirk, he's 100 percent disabled, but he can't get any medicine from the VA because he can't prove he was in country. Mr. Van Buskirk said that Hagen's physician, Dr. Baumsweiger (sp.?), a neurologist and psychiatrist, can attest to the legitimacy of his disability. He said Hagen could stick a needle through his tongue and not feel anything.

Mr. Van Buskirk volunteered that he had seen Hagen and others "convulsing" when gas was dropped on the SOG forces during Tailwind. He said: "I don't think it was CS." He added, "Whatever it was, it worked. Whatever was on the LZ got us out alive." When asked whether

he was familiar with change in CS tear agents used in theater from CBU-19 during the late 1960s to CBU-30, which was deployed in 1970, Mr. Van Buskirk replied that he was not. He opined that Sergeant's Plancich's death may have been caused by exposure to the gas—"his heart exploded before he reached age 40".

When asked about possible defectors, Mr. Van Buskirk referred to the script for his briefing to General Creighton Abrams after Operation Tailwind. He said the script referred to three enemy soldiers who refused to surrender, and one broke and ran away. All were killed. Mr. Van Buskirk would only say that the one who ran and the two who were in the "spider hole" were the ones he was talking about.

Mr. Van Buskirk stated he disagreed with April Oliver, the CNN reporter, that the camp the SOG forces discovered was gassed before they went in. "CNN got it wrong", he said. He also said he talked to Peter Arnett personally.

Mr. Van Buskirk strongly urged that more interviews be conducted, in particular of former Sergeant Hagen. He expressed a willing to discuss his experiences with anyone, subject to the restriction that questions about the use of sarin gas and defectors be submitted in writing. He mentioned that when he wrote his book, I knew there was going to be sensitive stuff, so he didn't talk about those things.



RESERVE AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1500

July 16, 1998

Robert L. Van Buskirk
433 Treasure Way
Rutherfordton, NC 28139

Dear Mr. Van Buskirk:

Thank you for talking with me over the phone the other day about your recollections of OPERATION TAILWIND. I appreciate your candor and willingness to discuss the operation.

During our conversation, you indicated that you would only be willing to answer questions concerning the use of Sarin nerve gas and about sighting Caucasians if those questions were posed in writing. I have three questions:

1. Is there anything you want to tell us about the use of Sarin nerve gas during OPERATION TAILWIND?
2. Is there anything you want to tell us concerning the targeting or sighting of U.S. defectors or other Caucasians during Operation Tailwind?
3. Are there any other comments about OPERATION TAILWIND you would like the Department of Defense to consider in its review of the operation?

I would be grateful if you would fax your written responses to these questions to me by the close of business Friday, July 17, 1998. My fax number is 703-695-3659.

Thank you for your cooperation, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Henry J. Schweiter", is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Henry J. Schweiter
Deputy Assistant Secretary
(Manpower and Personnel)

JULY 16th 1998

TO: HENRY J. SCHWEITER, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1500

Via: FAX 703-695-3659

REFERENCE: OPERATION THUNDERWIND

FROM: ROBERT L. VAN BUSKIRK, 433 TREASURE WAY, RFTN, NC. 28139

DEAR MR. SCHWEITER,

Thank You for Your letter - FAX - CONTAINING THE THREE QUESTIONS YOU'D LIKE ME TO ANSWER AS PART OF YOUR INVESTIGATION INTO ALLEGATIONS RAISED IN A RECENT REPORT BY CNN AND TIME MAGAZINE. AFTER MUCH THOUGHT AND REFLECTION, AS WELL AS REVIEWING MY OWN NOTES FROM SEVERAL CNN INTERVIEWS, BOTH ON AND OFF CAMERA, I STAND BY THE RECORD OF THOSE INTERVIEWS.

There are well over a hundred pages of printed NOTES AND TRANSCRIPTS, AVAILABLE TO YOUR INVESTIGATION; I'M SURE THROUGH CNN'S TOM JOHNSON AND RICK KAPLAN, BOTH OF WHOM EXPRESSED A DESIRE THAT CNN & THE PENTAGON DO A JOINT INVESTIGATION OF THE CHARGES RAISED BY THE CNN STORY.

I FURTHER ALLEGED YOU REQUESTED THE TRANSCRIPTS AND NOTES CONCERNING CAPT. MCCARTHEY. AND THAT MCCARTHEY MIGHT ALSO RELEASE A COPY TO YOU OF MY SEVEN PAGE BRIEFING TO GENERAL ABRAMS AND HIS STAFF. I WAS NOT ALLOWED TO KEEP A COPY OF ANY NOTES FROM THAT BRIEFING, SO I WAS SURPRISED TO LEARN CAPT. MCCARTHEY HAD PROVIDED THE PAPER WITH MY BRIEFING.

FINALLY, I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW, IF YOUR INVESTIGATION IS IN DEPTH ENOUGH TO LEARN; WHO TOLD THE ELEMENT, WHEN AND WHERE WE WERE GROUNDING FOR THUNDERWIND? IT WAS A TRAP WHICH ALMOST SUCCEEDED. FINALLY, I HOPE SSG. HAGAN AND OTHERS WHO SUFFERED FROM SOME TYPE OF 'TOXIC EXPOSURE' WOULD HAVE A 'WAVY' OR DISABILITY TO BE RECOGNIZED BY THE U.S. I WOULD HOPE PART OF YOUR INVESTIGATION IS TO HELP OUR WOUNDED.

Sincerely,

Robert Van Buskirk

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SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON


JUL 7 1998

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Allegations Regarding "Operation Tailwind"

The attached report reflects the review conducted by the Air Force in response to your June 9, 1998 directive.

I am confident that the report accurately supports the conclusion that no nerve gas was used by the Air Force during this Operation.


F. WHITTEN PETERS
Acting Secretary of the Air Force

Attachment:
Report

AIR FORCE HISTORY REPORT

ON

OPERATION TAILWIND

Air Force History Support Office

16 July 1998

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AIR FORCE HISTORY REPORT

OPERATION TAILWIND

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Events Which Prompted DoD Review

At 10:00 p.m. EDT on Sunday, 7 June 1998, Cable News Network (CNN) telecast the first edition of a new show, "NewsStand: CNN & Time," in coordination with Time magazine. The lead story on the 7 June telecast, called "Valley of Death," alleged that a U.S. Special Forces unit was inserted into Laos in September 1970 to kill U.S. military defectors. The story claimed that during the operation, code named TAILWIND, the Special Forces unit assaulted an enemy base camp "village" and killed enemy troops, women, children, and U.S. defectors. The telecast alleged that Air Force A-1 Skyraider aircraft dropped Sarin nerve gas CBU-15 munitions on the enemy base camp prior to the attack by the Special Forces unit. The CNN telecast also claimed that during their extraction, the Special Forces personnel called in Air Force A-1s, which again dropped Sarin nerve gas weapons on enemy soldiers.

The next day, Time magazine, dated 15 June 1998, included a similar story on Operation TAILWIND, written by CNN staff.

B. Review SECDEF Directed

On Monday, 8 June, the Secretary of Defense, William S. Cohen, announced a formal investigation of these charges. A 9 June memorandum to the Military Departments and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) directed a 30-day investigation of the two charges that the TAILWIND operation was directed against U.S. military defectors and that Sarin nerve gas was used. (See Appendix H)

C. Conclusions

This Air Force report will only address the allegation that Air Force A-1s dropped Sarin nerve gas during Operation TAILWIND, 11-14 September 1970. The other allegation, that Operation TAILWIND was directed against U.S. military defectors, will be addressed by the U.S. Army and the JCS.

Based on all of the information historians gathered in their investigation, Sarin nerve gas was not used by Air Force aircraft during Operation TAILWIND. The historians could find no evidence that the CBU-15 nerve agent munition was an operational weapon or deployed to Southeast Asia at the time.

On 13 and 14 September 1970, A-1s from the 56th Special Operations Wing dropped CBU-30 CS tear gas munitions to assist in the extraction of the Special Forces unit. The 13 September attempt was aborted, and the 14 September attempt succeeded.

Authorization to use CS tear gas in Search and Rescue operations in Laos derives from a 20 January 1968 Secretary of Defense Memorandum. (See Appendix C)

II. CONDUCT OF REVIEW

On 3 June 1997, the Air Force Historian (HQ USAF/HO), Dr. Richard P. Hallion, was informed of the upcoming 7 June CNN story about nerve gas in Laos, 1970. On 4 June, Air Force personnel began a thorough search to identify materials on TAILWIND and the use of gas of any kind in Southeast Asia. Dr. Hallion spoke to several knowledgeable sources: (1) Colonel Rod Paschall (retired Green Beret); (2) General Michael Dugan (retired Air Force Chief of Staff, A-1 pilot); (3) Colonel Eugene Deatruck (retired A-1 pilot); (4) Terry Bolstad (retired A-1 Search and Rescue (SAR) pilot); (5) Lt Col William

Flanagan (retired F-4 weapon systems operator); and Herbert Mason (historian for the Air Force Special Operations Command).

After the telecast, the Secretary of Defense ordered an investigation of the allegations that TAILWIND was directed against US military defectors, and that Sarin nerve gas was used in the operation. The Air Force Historian then ordered a program-wide search for relevant materials concentrating on the Air Force History Support Office (AFHSO), the Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA), and the Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC).

Additional Interviews:

1. Wayne Thompson (AFHSO) conducted interviews with Tom Stump, Don Feld, and Art Bishop, all of whom had been in the 56th Special Operations Wing (SOW) as A-1 pilots. Feld and Bishop flew the CBU-30 tear gas sorties on 14 September 1970. Thompson also interviewed Covey Forward Air Controllers of the 20th Tactical Air Support Squadron: Gary Green, George Boehmer, and Warner McGraw.

2. Diane Putney (AFHSO) interviewed Donald Knight and Wilfred Turcotte, officers who had commanded the 56 SOW's 456th Munitions Maintenance Squadron (MMS) in September 1970.

3. Yvonne Kinkaid (AFHSO) interviewed Lloyd O'Daniels, Covey FAC "Rider"; Lt Col Paul Spencer, Assistant Maintenance Supervisor, 456 MMS; Lt Col Wilfred Turcotte, commander, 456 MMS; Col Donald Knight, commander, 456 MMS; SMSgt James McCoy, Munitions Services Superintendent, 456 MMS; and CMSgt Donald Guy, Munitions Services Superintendent, 456 MMS.

4. Sheldon Goldberg (AFHSO) also interviewed Lt Col Spencer, Assistant Maintenance Supervisor, 456 MMS.

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12th Tactical Fighter Wing, July-December 1970
35th Tactical Fighter Wing, July-September 1970
56th Special Operations Wing, 1969-1971
366th Tactical Fighter Wing, July-December 1960
388th Tactical Fighter Wing, July-September 1970
400th Munitions Maintenance Squadron (Theater), 1964-1971
432nd Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, July-September 1970
504th Tactical Air Support Group, July-September 1970
41st Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Wing, July-September 1970
3rd Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group, July-September 1970

Participants in Air Force History Research:

Richard Hallion, The Air Force Historian
Wayne Thompson, Air Force History Support Office
Diane Putney, Air Force History Support Office
Sheldon Goldberg, Air Force History Support Office
Yvonne Kinkaid, Air Force History Support Office
Capt Roy Stanley, Air Force History Support Office
James Howard, Air Force Historical Research Agency
TSgt David Byrd, Air Force Historical Research Agency
Herbert Carlin, Air Force Materiel Command
William Elliot, Air Force Materiel Command
Vickie Jones, Air Force Materiel Command
Dennis Casey, Air Intelligence Agency
Lt Col Dale Wise, Secretary of the Air Force Declassification Team
SMSgt Jean Hardin, Secretary of the Air Force Declassification Team
MSgt Ray Bailey, Secretary of the Air Force Declassification Team

Richard Boylan, National Archives II-Textual Records

Charles Shaughnessy, National Archives II-Textual Records

Margret Adams, National Archives II-Center For Electronic Records

Lee Gladwin, National Archives II-Center for Electronic Records

Fred Graboske, U.S. Marine Corps History and Museums

William Siebert, National Personnel Records Center

III. DISCUSSION

A. Unclassified Account of TAILWIND

On 11 September 1970, Marine CH-53 helicopters and AH-1G Cobra gunships carried into Laos, near Chavane, a team of 16 Americans and a Special Commando Unit (SCU), consisting of Montagnard troops. The Americans were in Company B, Command and Control Central, Military Advisory Command Studies and Observation Group (MACSOG). Their mission, Operation TAILWIND, would last until 14 September 1970, and their objectives were reconnaissance, intelligence collection, and a diversion for a larger operation to the north.

From landing zone preparation on 11 September to extraction on 14 September, the team was provided continuous tactical air support by Air Force, Army, and Marine assets. The enemy almost continuously attacked the team during the four days they were in Laos. Air Force units under the operational control of the Seventh Air Force flew 76 sorties for TAILWIND and provided Forward Air Control (FAC) and Airborne Command and Control Center (ABCCC) aircraft and crews. Pilots used the code words "Prairie Fire" to refer to the infiltration and exfiltration of the MACSOG team. Similarly, MACSOG used the "Prairie Fire" code words to identify cross-border operations into its Laotian area of operations.

The A-1 Skyraider aircraft which flew TAILWIND missions belonged to the 56th Special Operations Wing (SOW), stationed at Nakhon Phanom

(NKP) Air Base, Thailand. The Thirteenth Air Force provided the wing with command, administration, facilities, and personnel, and the Seventh Air Force exercised operational control over the wing's aircraft. Three units flew the A-1s assigned to the 56 SOW:

1st Special Operations Squadron at NKP

602nd Special Operations Squadron at NKP

Operating Location AA (OL-AA) at Da Nang Air Base,
South Vietnam

In September 1970, the wing's 21st Special Operations Squadron (SOS) flew eleven CH-3E helicopters and one, new CH-53 helicopter which arrived at NKP on 8 August. The squadron referred to the large CH-53 as "BUFF," for "big, ugly, fat fellow," and this designation should not be confused with a similar BUFF nickname given to B-52 bombers. The helicopters of the 21 SOS did not participate in TAILWIND because they flew other combat missions in a "big operation," according to the squadron history, to cut the Ho Chi Minh trail in the Bolovens area of Laos.

The A-1 pilots assigned to the 56 SOW flew four types of combat missions: escort, strike, armed reconnaissance, and search and rescue (SAR). During SAR missions to rescue downed pilots, the wing operated with the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service, which flew the HH-3 "Jolly Green Giant" helicopters. The aircraft carried weapons appropriate for the type of mission flown. For a "strike" operation, for example, the munitions maintenance crews would load high explosive and fragmentation bombs and napalm. In "SAR support," at least one A-1 aircraft on the mission would carry M-47 smoke bombs and weapons with "CS" "riot control" tear gas, for use if warranted. An Air Force history, written by Earl H. Tilford, Jr., and first published in 1980, explained that tear gas was employed on SAR missions:

As the war continued, the North Vietnamese, Viet Cong, and Pathet Lao used increasingly sophisticated weapons and tactics to frustrate rescue efforts. Rescue forces reacted to these challenges by developing new weapons and changing tactics. Tear gas bombs and riot control chemicals were some of the most controversial weapons used to support rescue operations. These weapons included Cluster Bomb Unit (CBU)-19A/B and CBU-30A antipersonnel area denial bombs, which were essentially tear gas bombs.

The 56 SOW history for April-June 1969 identified the situations when the use of tear gas would be appropriate during SAR operations. The downed pilot himself would be deliberately gassed in some cases:

CBU-19 could be used on enemy gun or troop concentrations when the enemy was not equipped with masks or other protective equipment. In these areas it was more efficient to disable the enemy temporarily than to employ normal weapons. It was most effective in areas of widespread small arms which were normally difficult to locate and silence.

CBU-19 could be used directly on the survivor if the survivor was surrounded, had been captured, or was injured and unable to help himself and was in [im]minent danger from advancing enemy forces.

The report, "In-Country and Out-Country Strike Operations in Southeast Asia, 1 Jan 65-31 Dec 69," provided the five primary situations when CBU-19 and CBU-30 were employed in South Vietnam:

To deny the enemy his use of base camps, bunkers, tunnels, and caves

In prestrike operations in support of defoliation missions

In SAR operations to prevent the capture of downed aircrews

In offensive combat operations, such as assaults and suppression of small arms fire around helicopter landing zones

In defensive combat operations such as perimeter defense

The 56 SOW history for July-September 1970 referred to "gas birds" and defined them as aircraft carrying CBU-19/CBU-30. Thus, the A-1s of the 56 SOW sometimes carried and delivered CS tear gas munitions.

The word "incapacitating" was used to describe the CS weapons. The 56 SOW history in July described a SAR mission and mentioned

"incapacitating ordnance." Another report, "USAF Search & Rescue in Southeast Asia, 1 Jul 69-31 Dec 70," provided a definition for "CS" in its glossary: "personnel incapacitating agent."

The CBU-19 gas bomb had been originally designed for helicopters, but within the Air Force, mostly A-1s expended them, and they were little used after 1969. During 1970-1972 the Air Force principally used the CBU-30 tear gas cluster bomb. Both propeller aircraft, A-1s, and jet aircraft, especially F-4s and F-100s, employed the CBU-30, which contained 66 pounds of CS tear gas, while the CBU-19 contained only 14 pounds. The "In-Country and Out-Country Strike Operations" report described the CBU gas munitions:

The CBU-19 chemical cluster was a 130-lb. modified U.S. Army dispenser intended for use on helicopters and consisted of two subclusters fitted to a strongback. Each cluster contained 528 agent-filled canisters; each canister contained an incapacitating chemical, called CS, and a pyrotechnic fuze. Upon ejection from the aircraft, the fuze ignited the CS, disseminating the CS for four to six seconds. This required delivery below 600 feet AGL [above ground level] to insure that the chemical reached the ground. Also, as the cluster had originally been designed for use on helicopters, delivery was restricted to use on the A-1 and A-37 because the cluster could not withstand the airloads encountered on faster aircraft. The CBU-30 consisted of the SUU-13 downward ejection dispenser and 1,280 BLU-39/B23 submunitions, each filled with CS. Upon ejection, a pyrotechnic fuze in each submunition ignited, disseminating the agent into the air. Delivery was restricted to below 600 feet AGL to insure ground coverage. Upon contact with the ground, the submunitions skittered about, disseminating the CS even further. The CBU-30 was compatible with both low and high speed aircraft.

In the Air Force, CS had replaced the older, less potent CN tear gas. A MACV directive, 28 March 1970, defined CN as a "standard tear agent employed by law enforcement agencies" and CS as "an improved agent developed for military use." The BLU-52 consisted of CS-1, CS in a persistent powdered form, in a 750-lb. fire bomb casing. Because CS-1 tended to cake when wet, an oil-like substance was added to improve its flow qualities, and the improved fill was called CS-2 and the

munition was designated BLU-52A. BLU-52s functioned as anti-personnel area denial and interdiction munitions. They only recently were sent to the 56 SOW in September 1970 and caused problems. The Munitions Maintenance Squadron reported: "BLU-52's have arrived and are causing a difficult storage situation because of lack of proper decontaminants. These bombs will be restricted from use."

The Tilford history provided an account of the use of tear gas which highlights its potency and shows that those who breathed the agent could experience very strong physical reactions. It stated that on 15 February 1969, A-1 Skyraiders flew a SAR mission near the Laos-South Vietnam border and dropped CBU-19s. It continued:

Braving the constant hail of antiaircraft fire, the Skyraiders made the required mile-long run at 300 feet and 220 knots to hit all their targets--enemy antiaircraft gun positions. While the gunners choked, coughed, cried, and retched uncontrollably, a Jolly Green [helicopter] with its crew wearing gas masks swooped in and saved the pilot.

An Air Force historical CHECO report also included an account of the effects of tear gas. It included a statement from a downed Air Force pilot describing the use of riot control agents (CBU-19, CBU-30, and BLU-52) during his rescue near Ban Phanop in Laos, lasting three-days in December 1969:

They laid it all along the top of the ridge . . . [some of] it hit me . . . I might as well tell you what it feels like when that stuff goes off. I ran into a tree and was wrapped around the tree urinating, defecating, and retching all at the same instant. . . It also made me want to sneeze. It was a beauty to have 500 pounders and everything go off because it would give me a chance to sneeze. . . It goes into effect instantaneously. Physically and mentally you can't control yourself. . . After that everytime I'd come up on the air and ask for Vodka (A-1s carrying CBU-19), as soon as I'd tell them where, how far and the heading, I'd tell them 'Don't get it close to me.'

The "USAF Search & Rescue Report, 1 Jul 69-31 Dec 70," which covered the time of the TAILWIND Operation, contained illustrations of the A-1 Skyraider carrying its various weapons loads, and for the SAR

support configuration it indicated that the A-1 carried two CBU-30 weapons, and they were hung on the right and left "stubs" of the aircraft, which placed them under the right and left wing, immediately next to the fuselage. (See Appendix A) A set of notes dated January 1970, which a 56 SOW A-1 pilot consulted before flying missions, provided a warning: "To dispense CBU-30 consecutively, do not set train position. Instead, set the stub selector switches to SALVO one at a time."

The employment of tear gas "riot control" weapons in Southeast Asia by the Air Force and Army generated controversy, and appropriate officials in the chain of command authorized each use of the CS air weapon. The Seventh Air Force required regular reports on the exact number of munitions expended during specified time periods. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara issued a key authorization for use of CS in Laos on 20 January 1968 when he sent a memorandum to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stating, "With reference to JCSM 480-67 of 26 August 1967, I approve at this time only so much of the JCSM recommendation as pertains to the use of riot control agent CS in combat aircrew recovery operations in Laos." The MACSOG history which discussed TAILWIND noted, "The authority to use CS/CN gas within the PF [Prairie Fire] AO [area of operations] was held by the US Ambassador to Laos. Its use was considered on a case by case basis and was last utilized to assist in an extraction of an exploitation force on 14 September." This date, 14 September 1970, matches last day of the TAILWIND operation when the team was extracted and the operation ended. A MACV directive 25 December 1971 stated that the use of riot control agents commonly covered "extraction by helicopter of troops, medical evacuees, and downed aircrews."

The CBU-14 and CBU-25 weapons in the inventory of the 56 SOW deserve special consideration because the wing was discontinuing the use of CBU-14s and receiving CBU-25s in September 1970. Both cluster bomb units used the suspension unit, universal (SUU)-14 dispenser, filled with submunitions. Neither was a chemical munition. The CBU-14 was designed for use against light materiel targets, such as trucks. The CBU-25 was an anti-personnel weapon. The CBU-14s had a high percentage of duds. The 56 SOW history in September 1970 reported:

Other problems included the unforeseen change in ordnance types. When the shipment of CBU-25 arrived, the CBU Storage Area was filled to capacity with CBU-14 leaving no room for storage. The change was due to the characteristics of CBU-14 which sometimes hangs undetonated in trees, providing the enemy with a source of effective antipersonnel munitions for use against friendly troops in the form of booby traps. . . . Due to the late arrival of CBU-25 ordnance (September) follow up action was not available for this report. However, action was expected during October to request removal of CBU-14 from NKP.

In September the A-1s of the 56 SOW expended both CBU-14 and CBU-25 munitions.

Also during September 1970, the three units of the 56 SOW which flew the A-1 Skyraiders participated in TAILWIND, and pilots from the wing dropped the CS weapons used during the operation. The call sign of the A-1 pilots from the 1st Special Operations Squadron of the 56 SOW was "Hobo." Their squadron history for September stated:

The [T]ailwind exfil on 13 and 14 September was heavily opposed, but with the help of numerous accurate low-level attacks by A-1s, from both NKP and Danang, the ground team was successfully extracted on the second day. Many Hob[o] pilots were involved in this effort.

The squadron history for July 1970 referred to CBU-19/CBU-30 "gas birds," but the September history does not specifically state that the unit's aircraft dropped gas during TAILWIND.

The history of the 602nd Special Operations Squadron did not mention TAILWIND, but interviews confirmed that squadron pilots flew in support of the operation. Among the weapons the squadron used in September were CBU-30s, CBU-14s, and CBU-25s. No CBU-19s were used. The tear gas expenditures for the month consisted of eight CBU-30 tear gas munitions.

The 56 SOW's Operating Location AA, stationed at Da Nang, provided a description of its TAILWIND involvement in its September history. The A-1 pilots' call sign was "Spad":

On 11 September the Spads assisted in the infil of a unique long range reconnaissance team. Also on that date, units of the Royal Laotian Government were fighting to interdict Rt 23 in the Laotian panhandle. The reconnaissance team, code name "Tailwind," was three times their normal size and was intent on more than reconnaissance. Scheduled to be a diversion for the Laotian unit, Tailwind on 12 September made contact with the enemy. In response to this contact, the Spads launched 10 sorties to support the tactical emergency which had developed. On these sorties Spad pilots made numerous low altitude passes to .50 calibre and intense small arms and automatic weapons. Strikes were also directed against known mortar positions. By the 13th of September the enemy had definite knowledge he was fighting more than a standard reconnaissance team. An aggressive effort was made to overrun the special forces. The Spads again responded to what had now become a Prairie Fire Emergency by providing twelve sorties. Again low passes and precision delivery repelled hostile forces in their attempt to destroy the friendly team. This lasted throughout the day, and efforts were made to prepare for a first light launch.

On the 14th of September eight sorties were launched on this day to assist in the recovery of this team. The team was safely extracted at 1400 hours on the 14th of September. All total, the Spads provided thirty sorties in support of the "Tailwind." The team reported over 400 KBA [killed by air] and suffered only three lost during its heroic activities.

Among the munitions the OL-AA expended during the month were CBU-25s. In September 1970 the operating location expended no tear gas weapons.

Information in the 56 SOW history indicates that the A-1 Skyraiders which dropped tear gas during TAILWIND, expended CBU-30, not CBU-19, tear gas munitions. Two other sources point to CBU-30 as

the gas weapon the A-1s dropped. The computerized Southeast Asia Data Base (SEADAB) reveals that A-1s from NKP expended 6 CBU-30s on 13 September and 6 CBU-30s on 14 September, in the area where the TAILWIND team was located. The 12 CBU-30s used over the two-day period include the 8 CBU-30s specifically listed in the 602 SOS September history. Art Bishop, one of the pilots who dropped the tear gas on the last day of the operation, 14 September, stated that he used CBU-30, and he is certain of the type because he consulted a diary in which he had written CBU-30. The second pilot who dropped the gas bombs, Don Feld, clearly remembered it as tear gas, but could not recall the type of CBU.

Other USAF tactical air (TACAIR) units and aircraft operating in the part of Laos where the TAILWIND team operated on 11-14 September 1970 were: F-4s and AC-130s from the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW), Ubon Air Base, Thailand; F-4s from the 388 TFW, Korat Air Base, Thailand; F-100s, probably from the 35 TFW, Phan Rang Air Base, South Vietnam; F-105s from the 355 TFW, Takhli Air Base, Thailand; AC-119s from the 18 SOS at Da Nang Air Base; and OV-10s from the 504th Tactical Air Support Group at NKP. Most of the unit histories did not mention TAILWIND. One did preserve the letter of congratulations from General Lucius Clay, Jr., Seventh Air Force commander, to the crews of the 8 TFW, for their participation in the operation. Clay singled out for special recognition the pilot and crew of an AC-130 Spectre gunship, call sign Moody 2, from the 16 SOS. SEADAB computerized data did not show any aircraft other than the A-1s from NKP as dropping gas munitions during TAILWIND.

Among the responsibilities of the 456th Munitions Maintenance Squadron (MMS) of the 56 SOW were those to supply the wing with all

required munitions and associated components for combat missions and to support all loading, downloading, arming, and disarming of all wing aircraft requiring munitions. During an interview, the commander of the 456 MMS at the time of TAILWIND, Lt. Col Wilfred N. Turcotte, USAF, retired, stated that the wing had in its inventory tear gas munitions, but no Sarin. The idea of nerve agent munitions at NKP was a "startling concept" to him. The men in his squadron who loaded the weapons on the aircraft did so with no protective gear and often worked in the hot climate "stripped to the waist," wearing shorts or long pants. As commander, he was often on the flight line as munitions were prepared and loaded. He certainly would have known if there was poison Sarin gas in the weapons his men handled. There was none. He would have been notified if Sarin gas was going to be used on a mission. He was never so informed.

During an interview, the Assistant Maintenance Supervisor of the 456 MMS at the time of TAILWIND, Lt Col Paul C. Spencer, USAF, retired, explained that he had received formal training in identifying and handling munitions of all types, including nerve gas. He said there was no Sarin at NKP. Had there been he certainly would have been aware of it, and he knew how to recognize it. He stated that had he seen any he would have immediately reported it to the Inspector General. At no time while he was in the 56 SOW did he see special protective clothing, masks, rubber aprons, etc. necessary when storing and moving nerve agent munitions. He was familiar with every storage and work area and went through them all. He checked munitions loads daily. The gas munitions at NKP were there for search and rescue (SAR) missions. These weapons were preloaded on trailers so they could quickly be uploaded to the SAR aircraft.

The officer who assumed command of the 456 MMS on 23 September 1970, nine days after TAILWIND, Col. Donald L. Knight, USAF, retired, stated that the 56 SOW used tear gas on missions, but that he had received no information at all about nerve agent munitions ever being in the 56 SOW inventory of weapons. He never heard anything about Sarin at NKP, and none was in the wing when he commanded the 456 MMS. He described how weapons were preloaded on trailers in the munitions area and driven over to the aircraft where 456 MMS members loaded them onto the aircraft. The only protective equipment he remembered his munitions loaders wearing on the flight line were ear plugs.

After the TAILWIND operation, General Clay, as commander of the Seventh Air Force, attended a briefing on the mission 11-14 September, given by one of the members of the ground element. The briefer described in detail the combat action the group engaged in while in Laos, and the tactical air power his team relied upon. Clay wrote, "Describing the air support as 'magnificent,' the briefer further stated the mission could not have been accomplished without the coordinated, accurate air support his forces received."

Air Force units supported TAILWIND with effective and continuous air power, but at no time during the operation did any Air Force aircraft deliver Sarin nerve gas. The A-1 Skyraiders did expend CBU-30 tear gas, which contributed to the successful extraction of the TAILWIND team.

TAILWIND from the ABCCC EC-130 Perspective Matched to SEADAB Data

Two Airborne Command and Control Center (ABCCC) EC-130 aircraft flew during TAILWIND and reported daily on the mission, starting on its second day, September 12, when a Prairie Fire Emergency was declared. The ABCCC messages, matched to data in the computerized Southeast Asia Data Base, provide additional information about the operation.

The calls signs for the two ABCCC aircraft were Moonbeam and Hillsboro.

On 11 Sep 70 sorties by 8 TFW F-4s from Ubon dropped MK-82 bombs at a landing zone in southern Laos at YC 4370 0470.

For the night of 12/13 Sep Moonbeam reported coverage by FLIP (1115), an AC-119 gunship from the 18 SOS (Danang), and Moody 1 and 2 (1103 & 1119) AC-130 Spectre gunships from the 8 TFW at Ubon at coordinates YC 4362 0498. The supporting aircraft could see mortar rounds, grenades, and rockets falling on Company B. Firefly 44, an A-1 out of NKP (56 SOW), expended a load of CBU-25s in support of Tailwind that night, as did 18 Spad 01, an A-1 from 56 SOW OL-AA at Danang. Both were guided by an Alma FAC.

The Prairie Fire Emergency continued during 13 Sep 70. ABCCC Hillsboro reported Company B moving from landing zone to landing zone, trying to exfiltrate the area. They were not successful, and one Marine CH-53 (Gnat One) was destroyed but the crew was saved. Hillsboro reported 22 A-1 sorties and 8 quick-reaction force (QRF) sorties (F-4s) supporting Tailwind on 13 Sep. These sorties included Wolfpack 11 and 12 F-4s from 8 TFW (Ubon) dropping MK-82 bombs and CBU-24s at YC 4480 0570; Hobo 20 and 44 A-1s from 56 SOW (NKP) dropping CBU-25s; Spad 01 and 03 A-1s from 56 SOW OL-AA (Danang) dropping CBU-25s and BLU-32B fire bombs.

During the 13 Sep exfiltration attempts, CBU-30 tear gas bombs were dropped at YC 4450 0380 by Firefly 24 and Hobo 46, which were 56 SOW A-1s from NKP.

Later in the day, additional support was provided by Firefly 34 and 35 (56 SOW A-1s from NKP) dropping CBU-25s at YC 4350 0450.

During the night of 13/14 Sep Moonbeam ABCCC reported that Company B had 3 critical casualties, and 8 others wounded. Gunships Greg 1 and 2, Will and Check, provided cover. Additional support was provided by Hobo 30 and 31; Firefly 42 and 43; and Spad 03 and 04.

Company B was extracted successfully at 1500L on 14 Sep 70. Another Marine CH-53 was lost in this effort. Hillsboro reported that at least 10 A-1 and 8 QRF (F-4) sorties were flown in support of Tailwind on 14 Sep and guided by Gazor FACs. Wolfpack 11, 21, 41, and 51 F-4s (8 TFW from Ubon) dropped CBU-24s and MK 82 bombs at YC 4220 0570. Some of the A-1 sorties were Hobo 31 and 32 and Spad 01, 02, 03 and 04 (56 SOW OL-AA from Danang) dropping CBU-25s.

In support of the exfiltration on 14 Sep, CBU-30 tear gas was dropped by Firefly 44 and Hobo 20 (56 SOW A-1s from NKP) at YC 4450 0380.

SOURCES:

1. 7AF ABCCC Msg & Narrative Rpts, 12-14 Sep 70.
2. JCS SEADAB, 11-14 Sep 70.

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Killpack, 8TFW/CC, 8 October 1970, in History (S), "8th Tactical Fighter Wing," vol 2, microfilm, AFHSO.

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Interviews, Lt Col Paul C. Spencer, USAF, retired, by Yvonne A. Kinkaid, AFHSO, 3 July 1998, and Sheldon A. Goldberg, AFHSO, 3 July 1998.

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B. Related Topics

1. Considerations: Nerve Agent Weapons

The following describes an exercise with MC-1, a Sarin nerve agent munition, which shows the precautions necessary when handling lethal nerve gas. In January 1969, the 313th Air Division informed the 400th Munitions Maintenance Squadron (MMS) and other interested USAF units on Okinawa of a USAF operational test and evaluation program for the 750 lb.. MC-1 Sarin nerve gas bomb to be conducted at Dugway Proving Grounds, Utah, in March 1969.

Leakproof containers were shipped in from Ogden Air Materiel Area (OOAMA), and Disaster Control Forces at Kadena were extensively trained. Army and Air Force Technical Escort teams inspected the 25 weapons carefully and supervised the loading into the containers which were then mounted on 9 pallets.

On 27 March 1969, the convoy of bombs left the Chibana Army Ammunition Depot in tractor trailers for an hour and a half drive to Kadena. They were escorted by Security Police, Disaster Control, and medical teams. Loading into the C-141 took an hour.

The C-141 flew to Dugway via Barber's Point, Hawaii. The Technical Escort team and the aircrew had masks and Atropine. The team worked in shifts to monitor the cargo by checking the pallet tie downs and the containers. There was no way to check for leaks within the containers. Since the gas was tasteless, odorless, and invisible, the method used to detect leaks indoors was to place several rabbits in cages around the area and see if they were affected. This procedure was done on the flight. The rabbits survived. The trip was uneventful.

SOURCES: Trip Report, DTC 69-14, Tech Escort Support, 27-28 Mar 69, 1Lt P.C. Spencer, 313 AD/DMW, 30 Apr 69, in History 400 MMS, Jan-Jun 1969, and Interview with Lt Col P. C. Spencer, USAF, Ret., 3 Jul 1998.

2. Clay/Killpack Letter (7 AF/CC Letter to 8 TFW/CC)

At some point after 7 June 1998, CNN provided a copy of an Air Force letter from the Seventh Air Force (7 AF) Commander to the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing (8 TFW) Commander, congratulating the latter on his wing's performance in Operation TAILWIND. The letter had a one-page attachment with excerpts from a TAILWIND after-action report. At issue is an unreadable digit in the last paragraph of the excerpts page, referring to a cluster bomb unit (CBU) weapon, possibly CBU-15 or CBU-25.

The historians found a copy of the 7 AF letter in the history of the 8 TFW, July-September 1970. It did not include the attachment. They also found correspondence forwarding the 7 AF letter to the Wing Director of Operations and the 16th Special Operations Squadron (16 SOS) because the 7 AF letter singled out one AC-130 crew for special praise.

On 30 June 1998, the historians received a copy of the TAILWIND after-action report delivered to General Abrams by Lt Van Buskirk in 1970. From the fax markings, the report seems to have come from the McCarley family. Most of the quoted items in the excerpts page match the Van Buskirk report. The use of CBU-25s is mentioned three times in the Van Buskirk account. Van Buskirk's report identified the gas munition used on 14 September 1970 as CBU-19 tear gas. Actually, the historians have determined that it was CBU-30 tear gas.

The historians were not able to find coverage of TAILWIND or the 7 AF Commander's letter in the history of 7 AF, July-December 1970. They could not find any similar congratulatory letters to any of the other 7 AF Wings participating in TAILWIND.

Attached to the copy of the 7 AF Commander's letter provided by CNN was a Defense Technical Information Center (DTIC) listing for a September 1967 Air Proving Ground Command Report of an engineering evaluation of the CBU-15/A.

The report covers test of the CBU-15/A with F-100, F-105, and F-4C aircraft from August 1964 through July 1967. The Phase I bomb operated properly, but did not provide enough area coverage to meet the operational requirement. It was also estimated that a larger Phase II bomb would not meet the operational requirement.

It was recommended that if six SUU-13/A dispensers were fitted to an F-4D, it might produce an area coverage to meet the operational requirement.

The report shows that this munition was being tested on fast-moving jet aircraft. There is no indication of compatibility testing with "slow moving" A-1 Skyraider aircraft.

3. Explanation of Research in SEADAB and CACTA

The Southeast Asia Data Base (SEADAB) is in the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). It describes fixed-wing combat air missions of the U.S. military services, from 1970 to 1975, and includes such data as mission dates, aircraft flown, weapons loads, and bomb damage assessments. In 1977 the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) gave the SEADAB computer tapes and SEADAB computer coding instructions dated 1975 to NARA.

Early in 1993, an AF Reserve IMA officer assigned to the Air Force History Support Office (AFHSO) began work on decoding the SEADAB tapes in NARA. The Office of the Air Force Historian (HQ USAF/HO) provided funding to a contractor which employed some personnel who worked with SEADAB in the early 1970s. Additional funding was provided in 1996 by Special Operations Command, Pacific (SOCPAC), which needed the data for de-mining projects in SEA, in the effort to locate and detonate unexploded ordnance dropped during the conflict in SEA. A full and accurate decoding of the more than 170 data fields for all of 1970-1975 requires significant additional research.

While doing their TAILWIND research, Air Force historians requested that the Reserve officer generate a computer print-out from SEADAB showing any CBU-15 munitions dropped by A-1 aircraft, 1970-1972. The print-out showed that the A-1s dropped "CBU-15 AntiMaterial" weapons more than 2,000 times. The historians knew an error occurred because the CBU-15 is not an anti-materiel munition and the weight of the weapon was incorrect. They doubted that the CBU-15 nerve agent bomb could have been used secretly over 2,000 times. They asked the USAF Reserve officer who had generated the print-out to see if the coding instructions could explain how the error occurred.

The officer consulted a second set of SEADAB computer card coding instructions which he had acquired from the Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) history office. Both the PACAF coding instructions and the 1975 JCS coding instructions referred to the same SEADAB data base, but the instructions were printed at different times.

The PACAF coding instructions are in a binder titled "Old SEADAB Tables" and consist of two sets of print-outs showing the current status of the computer card coding instructions from August 1970 to November 1974. One set with data printed in a narrow, compact format identifies Code 415 in the munitions table (Table 8) as CBU-14 Anti-Material, 250 lbs. from 1970 to 1974. The other set, with a spread out full text format, shows Code 415 in Table 8 as CBU-14 Anti-Material, 250 lbs. from August 1970 to September 1972. The 30 October 1972 edition shows Code 415 as CBU-15, but still describes it as Anti-Material, 250 lbs. This change continues through 1974.

The bottom line was that in 1970, there was no code for CBU-15. Code 415 meant CBU-14 in the card coding instructions for 1970. When the tape was run for 1970 using the 1970 card coding instructions, it showed CBU-14, 24, and 25 as anti-material and anti-personnel bomblets and CBU-30 tear gas.

As a double check to the SEADAB data base, the historians studied a second computerized data base in NARA, the Combat Air Activities (CACTA) file. CACTA contains data from combat air missions in Southeast Asia, October 1965-December 1970. It was the official record for 1970 while SEADAB was still being tested. SEADAB became the official record for operational aircraft sorties on 1 January 1971.

NARA provided the historians with a CACTA computer data tape which contained information on all missions flown in September 1970.

The historians sent the tape to the contractors who had been working on SEADAB for the de-mining project. The contractors worked over the 4th of July weekend 1998 to extract data from the CACTA tape. They succeeded in producing a print-out of missions flown during the time of TAILWIND, 11-14 September 1970.

The CACTA data on all missions flown during the TAILWIND Operation showed no CBU-15 sarin gas munitions expended. No nerve agent weapons of any type showed up in the CACTA data.

The SEADAB data had shown 4 sorties carrying CBU-30 on 13 September 1970 and 4 sorties carrying CBU-30 on 14 September. Although the CACTA computer print-out was incomplete, it did show a "Hobo" mission, number 623, carrying CBU-30 to target coordinates YC44500380 on 14 September. One of the sorties shown in SEADAB for 14 September and expending CBU-30 also had the call sign "Hobo," mission number 623, and target coordinates YC44500380. CACTA confirmed data in SEADAB that CBU-30 was expended on 14 September by an aircraft with the call sign "Hobo." "Hobo" was the call sign of the 1st Special Operations Squadron of the 56th Special Operations Wing, which flew the A-1 Skyraider missions on 14 September for Operation TAILWIND.

See Appendices G and I.



SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

FROM: The Secretary of the Army, 7/20/98
Prepared by COL Woolfolk, ECC, 695-7552

SUBJECT: Report Summary--Operation TAILWIND--INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

PURPOSE: To Provide the Results of a Review of Allegations Regarding Operation
TAILWIND

DISCUSSION: The Department of the Army conducted research to determine whether the Army used Sarin nerve gas during Operation TAILWIND as directed (Enclosure 1). The Army's report is at Enclosure 2.

Completed research revealed no evidence of use of Sarin chemicals by U.S. forces in Vietnam. No evidence has been found indicating that Sarin nerve gas was stored by the Army within Vietnam, Laos, or Thailand. The Army did have Sarin in weapon storage facilities in Okinawa, Japan, during this time period.

These conclusions are based upon a two-part search for Army documents; the first within the National Archives' Washington National Record Center and the second within all Army organizations that could be expected to be aware of such use of Sarin nerve gas. Interviews were conducted with participants who had personal knowledge of and/or participated in the operation. Finally, specific research regarding the Army's storage and use of Sarin was conducted to provide the exact location of munitions storage.

The Army's costs for researching these allegations are approximately \$38,643.00, which includes the 1,795 work hours used to conduct this research and expenditures such as telephone calls. The report will be updated if new evidence is found. The Army's points of contact for compiling this report are Colonel Robert Buckstad, who can be reached telephonically at 703-695-6432 or by email at bucksrd@hqda.army.mil; and Mr. Ed Arnold, at 703-614-0559 or arnolew@hqda.army.mil.

Enclosures



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TAB F - ODCSPER consolidated response to Army Chief of Staff questions on who had Executive Agent responsibility over Sarin during Operation TAILWIND timeframe, and who had Command and Control of lethal Agents stored in Okinawa during the timeframe of Operation TAILWIND.

TAB G - Statements provided by individuals to Special Forces Association regarding Operation TAILWIND.



THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

JUN 9 1998

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

SUBJECT: Allegations Regarding "Operation Tailwind"

Allegations have been made that in the early 1970's a military operation in Laos called "Operation Tailwind" was directed toward US military defectors, and that Sarin Nerve gas was used during the operation.

You are directed to review military records, archives, historical writings, other appropriate information sources, and interview individuals with personal knowledge for the purpose of determining if there is any truth in this matter.

Please provide me with the results of your review within 30 days.

A handwritten signature, likely of Bill Clinton, is written in the center of the page. The signature is in cursive and appears to read "Bill Clinton".

80602050

U10218 198

End 1



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY
105 ARMY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON DC 20310-0105
10 July 1998

MEMORANDUM FOR UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
(PERSONNEL AND READINESS)

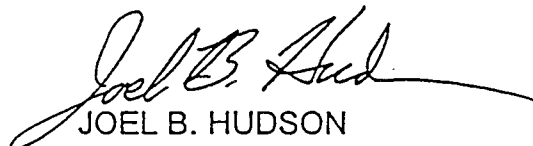
SUBJECT: Report Summary – Operation TAILWIND

The Department of the Army conducted research to determine whether the Army used Sarin Nerve gas during Operation TAILWIND as requested. See enclosure 1. This memorandum provides the report. See enclosure 2.

Completed research revealed no evidence of any such use of Sarin. There is no evidence that Sarin Nerve gas was stored by the Army within Vietnam, Laos, or Thailand. The Army's costs researching these allegations are approximately \$33,708.00 for the 1,710.5 workhours used to conduct this research and expenditures such as telephone calls. The report will be updated if new evidence is found.

These conclusions are based upon (1) a two part document search for Army documents (a) within the National Archives' Washington National Record Center and (b) within all Army organizations that reasonably could be expected to be aware of such use of Sarin Nerve gas, (2) interviews conducted with specific participants in the operation, and (3) specific research regarding the Army's storage and use of Sarin.

The Army points of contact for compiling this report are Colonel Buckstad, who can be reached telephonically at 703-695-6432 and by email at bucksrd@hqda.amry.mil; and Mr. Arnold, at 703-614-0559 or arnolew@hqda.army.mil.


JOEL B. HUDSON

Enclosures



Department of the Army



Report Summary

Operation TAILWIND

Report, 20 July 1998

Contains Information Protected by the Privacy Act

DOI: 20 July 1998

Department of the Army

Report Summary
for
Operation TAILWIND

DOI: 20 July 1998

1. **Purpose.** This report provides the results of the Department of the Army's review into allegations that Sarin Nerve gas was used during Operation TAILWIND.
2. **Conclusion.** Research reveals no evidence of any use of Sarin, nor was it a goal of Operation TAILWIND to target U.S. Army defectors. Additionally, there is no evidence that Sarin nerve gas was stored by the Army in Vietnam, Laos, or Thailand.
3. **Approach.** The Department of the Army's review into the alleged use of Sarin Nerve gas during Operation TAILWIND focused on three specific research efforts.

a. First, we conducted a search for targeted documents which relate to the use of Sarin during Operation TAILWIND. We searched in the National Archives' Washington National Record Center and within the Army organizations which could be expected to have been involved in any such use of Sarin during Operation TAILWIND. These searches revealed that there are no existing documents which indicate that the Department of the Army participated in the use of Sarin during Operation TAILWIND.

(1) The Army Declassification Agency did a search of their database using eighteen specific keywords (listed on page 2 of their report, see tab entitled *Archives Search*). The search identified 132 folders which required additional review. Of these, 130 were at the National Archive's Washington National Record Center (WNRC) (located in Suitland MD) and 2 rolls of microfilm which are at the Military History Institute (MHI) at Carlisle Barracks (Carlisle, PA). All folders and microfilm were reviewed. This in-depth review of the contents of each folder and microfilm was NEGATIVE for Operation TAILWIND information.

(2) The Technology Management Office within the Office of the Chief of Staff, Army released a message to all Army organizations which could be expected to have documentary evidence of any use of Sarin during Operation TAILWIND. Each organization was tasked to review their current files area and records holding areas, for all classified and unclassified documents that reference Sarin or TAILWIND during the period 1 Jan '70 and 31 Dec '75. This search resulted in four organizations reporting information pertaining to Sarin – none of which was related to Operation TAILWIND.

(a) The following Army organizations conducted document searches:

- U.S. Army Forces Command
- U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command
- U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command
- U.S. Army Special Operations Command
- U.S. Army Pacific Command
- U.S. Army Materiel Command
- Military Traffic Management Command
- U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command
- National Guard Bureau
- Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence
- Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans
- Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics
- Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel
- Center for Military History
- The Army Judge Advocate General
- The Army Inspector General
- The Army Surgeon General
- Office of the Secretary of the Army
- Program Manager, Chemical Demilitarization Office

(b) **TAB A** contains the results of document searches directed by the Technology Management Office and the Army Declassification Activity.

b. Second, the Center for Military History telephonically interviewed six of seven individuals identified as possibly having firsthand knowledge of Operation TAILWIND and, thus, any use of Sarin Nerve gas. SGT Jay **Graves** declined to be interviewed, but provided a statement to the Special Forces Association. None of the interviewees had personal knowledge of the use of Sarin or any lethal chemical agent during Operation TAILWIND. All stated that the purpose of the mission was to attack installations on the Ho Chi Minh trail and create a diversion for another operation. **Adair** [one of the individuals interviewed] also stated that there was no mention before or after the mission about defectors or Caucasians in the area of operations. **Adair** himself saw no Caucasians during the operation except his fellow soldiers. **Young** [one of the individuals interviewed] saw the gas being sprayed, did not use his damaged mask when the [tear] gas drifted over him, and reported that those who breathed the gas "coughed, choked, but otherwise were not slowed down." **Hagen** [one of the individuals interviewed] also saw the mist [tear gas] drifting over their position. His mask had a bullet through the filter and when he breathed the gas, "I started throwing up, (and) fell to the ground in convulsions. In discussions with others after the mission, others said that once the effects wear off, you're fine." **Schmidt** [one of the individuals

interviewed] noted "it was typical to carry masks...it was a normal part of SOG kit." He felt the gas used was stronger than normal tear gas, but "did not hear any rumors to the effect that nerve gas was used on TAILWIND, or that it was ever used on SOG missions." Thus, the interviews conducted reveal that none of the individuals interviewed have any knowledge of the use of Sarin during Operation TAILWIND.

(1) Each interview attempted to gain answers to the following:

(a) Document any information regarding the use of lethal chemical munitions in Vietnam.

(b) Identify the exact storage location (base and country) of any lethal chemical munitions known by the interviewee.

(c) Identify the authority empowered to authorize the tactical use of lethal chemical munitions in support of Special Operations Group (SOG) missions.

(d) Identify the name and role of any soldier who might have additional information regarding Operation TAILWIND.

(2) The following lists the individuals who were interviewed:

(a) Individuals interviewed:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Identified as a result of</u>
SGT Minton, FNU	Provided FAC audio tape from SOCOM archives
MSG Adair, Morris N.	From USARV list of awarded individuals
SGT Young, David L.	From USARV list of awarded individuals
WO1 Watson, William D.	Referral
SGT Schmidt, Craig	Early Bird Article
SGT Hagen, Michael E.	From USARV list of awarded individuals
SGT Graves, Jay	Early Bird Article (Declined to be interviewed, but provided a statement to the Special Forces Association.)

(b) At **TAB B** are the interviewer's recapitulation of these interviews and the Army documents which tasked that the interviews be conducted.

c. Third, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics tasked the Army Materiel Command to provide answers to specific questions raised during internal DoD/Army discussions. We know that during the timeframe of Operation TAILWIND, the Army had weapons containing lethal chemical agents stored within the continental United States and in Okinawa. There is no evidence that any lethal chemical agents were released for employment during the time of Operation TAILWIND. Following are the specific research questions:

- (1) What was the quantity of Sarin the US Army controlled then and now?
- (2) Where were lethal chemical munitions stored during the time of the operation?
- (3) In what form was the lethal chemical agent stored (i.e., large drums, or weapons)?
- (4) Who managed the custody of the lethal chemical agents? Who had authority to issue lethal chemical agents from the storage sites? Was any ever issued?

TAB C contains the results of the research and the Army documents tasking the research.

d. The Army researched additional issues which arose while developing this report.

(1) The Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, DA, analyzed two shipping documents related to an undated summary of an alleged January 1970 shipment of 2.75" rockets. The research revealed that the shipping labels do not conform with marking requirements in place at the time of Operation TAILWIND, for ammunition containing lethal chemical agents. Thus, the presence of the shipping label does not indicate a presence of Sarin. **TAB E** contains the analysis of these documents.

(2) The Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, DA, orchestrated research to determine (a) which DoD agency was the executive agent for lethal chemical agents, and (b) who had command and control of the lethal agents stored in Okinawa during the timeframe of Operation TAILWIND.

(a) The Center for Military History interviewed MG (Ret) John Hayes, the former Commander, 2nd Logistics Command, Okinawa, where Sarin was stored during the timeframe of Operation TAILWIND. According to MG Hayes, the Army was the overall executive agent for the U.S. chemical stockpile at that time. MG Hayes had command and control of the Sarin stockpile in Okinawa during TAILWIND. During his

command, MG Hayes never released or approved the release of any lethal chemical agents for use by any U.S. Forces serving in Southeast Asia.

(b) TAB F contains the interview notes of MG(Ret) Hayes and other related documents.

4. Costs. It cost the Department of the Army approximately \$38,418 and 1,795 workhours to conduct this research. Detailed costs are identified at TAB D.

Department of the Army

Report Summary
for
Operation TAILWIND

Annotated Index

DOI: 20 July 1998

- Results of searches for Army documents within the. TAB A
National Archives' Washington National Record Center
and the Army reveal that there are no existing documents
which indicate that the Department of the Army participated
in the use of Sarin during Operation TAILWIND
- Results of interviews of individuals who participated TAB B
in or had personal knowledge of Operation TAILWIND
reveal that none of the individuals interviewed have any
knowledge of the use of Sarin during Operation TAILWIND
- Results of specific research conducted regarding the TAB C
types of munitions and chemicals available for use during
the time period of Operation TAILWIND reveals that while
lethal agents were stored as weapons, available Army
documents indicate that no lethal chemicals were stored in
Vietnam, Laos, or Thailand during the timeframe of Operation
TAILWIND (1970).
- Detailed costs TAB D
- Analysis of shipping label and packing document allegedly. TAB E
related to a 1970 shipment of unusual weapons to Okinawa,
provided by DoD for Army evaluation.
- Interviews of MG (Ret) John Hayes, former Commander, TAB F
2nd Logistics Command, Okinawa, during the TAILWIND period,
confirming command and control of lethal chemical munitions and
disposition of these munitions under his command.



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
1000 NAVY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350-1000

10 July 1998

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

FROM: Secretary of the Navy *John H. Dalton*
Prepared by: Eugene P. Angrist, Acting General Counsel,
614-1994

SUBJECT: Allegations Regarding Operation TAILWIND - INFORMATION
MEMORANDUM

PURPOSE: To provide the Secretary of Defense with the Results
of the Department of the Navy's Record Review Regarding
Operation TAILWIND.

DISCUSSION: On June 9, 1998, the Secretary of Defense directed
the Secretary of the Navy to conduct a review of any pertinent
sources to determine if the allegations of the use of Sarin gas
on U.S. defectors in Operation TAILWIND were valid. This review
was the result of a CNN/Time report which aired on June 7, 1998,
and alleged that the U.S. military used Sarin gas to kill
American defectors during Operation TAILWIND. This review took
thirty days and the results are contained in the attachment.
There is no evidence, classified or unclassified, that Sarin gas
was used on American defectors or in any way during Operation
TAILWIND.

Attachment:

1. Department of the Navy Report on Operation TAILWIND, with
attachments.

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY REPORT ON OPERATION TAILWIND

Introduction

On June 9, Secretary Cohen directed the Secretary of the Navy to conduct a review of military records, historical writings, other appropriate sources and interview individuals with personal knowledge of Operation TAILWIND. This order followed allegations by CNN and Time that Sarin nerve gas was used to kill U.S. military defectors during this operation. The Secretary of the Navy directed the General Counsel to conduct this document search. On June 11, 1998, Acting General Counsel of the Navy, Eugene P. Angrist, requested the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC), Director of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS), Counsel to the Commandant, Judge Advocate General of the Navy (JAG) and the Staff Judge Advocate of the Marine Corps to document any information to substantiate these allegations (attachment 1).

Overview of Review Process

This review process took 30 days to complete. Approximately 224 total man-hours were spent searching various archives for information related to Operation TAILWIND. The following lists the areas searched:

CNO - Archives of Office of Naval Intelligence (N2), Deputy CNO (Plans, Policy & Operations) (N3/N5), Deputy CNO (Resources, Warfare Requirements & Assessments) (N8), Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet (CINCLANTFLT), Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet (CINCPACFLT), Special Warfare Command (SPECWARCOM), and the Naval Historical Center;

Marine Corps - Command Chronologies, Oral Histories, and Archived Documents;

NCIS - Defense Clearance and Investigations Index, automated index of NCIS investigative and adjudicative files, the Counterintelligence Directorate's Case Management System, and records in the NCIS Records Center;

JAG - Archives.

LtCol Arthur Picone Jr., USMC, (Ret.), a Marine veteran of the operation (CH-53D Helicopter Aircraft Commander and Assigned

Alternate Flight Leader During Operation TAILWIND), was located, questioned and voluntarily submitted a statement in which he categorically denies the allegation of Sarin use (enclosure 5 of attachment 2). Also, included is former Marine Corps pilot Joseph L. Driscoll's statement to Congressman Sam Farr (attachment 3) denying the use of Sarin gas during the operation. Mr. Driscoll was a 1st Lieutenant, flying with HML-367, a squadron of Cobra gunships, which supported Marine H-53 helicopters participating in Operation TAILWIND.

Summary

The Marine Corps produced all the information that the DON can provide pertinent to this review (attachment 2). All of the Navy components submitted negative reports (attachment 4). This is not surprising in light of the fact that this operation involved Army, Air Force and Marine Corps units only. The documents provided include: Marine Aircraft Group 16 Command Chronology for 1-30 September 1970 (EXCERPT); Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 463 Command Chronology for 1-30 September 1970 (EXCERPT); selected message traffic IRT Operation TAILWIND; Flightcrew Assignment/Debrief Sheets, Operation TAILWIND; in addition to LtCol Picone's voluntary statement. None of the information uncovered gives any indication that Sarin gas was used during these missions.

Discussion

The following is an excerpt from U.S. Marines in Vietnam 1970-1971, pages 295 & 296:

Each month, from May through November, Marine helicopters took part in SOG lifts, described in HMH-463 reports as "a tri-Service mission in a denied access area." These activities reached their climax in Operation TAILWIND. During this operation, between 7 and 14 September, HMH-463 daily committed five or six CH-53Ds, eventually supported by four Marine AH-1Gs, five Army AH-1Gs or UH-1Es, two Marine and one Air Force OV-10As, and numerous flights of jets. In the face of heavy antiaircraft fire, the Marine-led flights inserted a company-sized SOG force near a North Vietnamese regiment and then, after the SOG troops had accomplished their mission, extracted them. The operation cost HMH-463 two CH-53s shot down and six crewman wounded, all of whom were rescued.

Although Operation TAILWIND resulted in an estimated 430 NVA casualties and in the capture of documents of great intelligence value, it evoked sharp protests to MACV from Generals McCutcheon and Armstrong.

The documents discovered by the Marine Corps support this narrative. "The purpose of the mission," according to Mr. Driscoll, "was to create a disruption along the North Vietnamese supply route. The unusually large size of the insertion was to reacquire the enemy to re-deploy their forces in response." This is echoed in the MAG-16 Command Chronology excerpt (enclosure 1 of attachment 2). There is no mention of U.S. defectors or the use of Sarin gas.

Conclusion

There is no evidence in the Navy and Marine Corps classified or unclassified official records that would support the allegation that Sarin gas was employed against U.S. defectors, or that U.S. defectors were targeted in any way during Operation TAILWIND. Two Marine Corps pilots who participated in the operation support this view.

Attachments:

1. Acting General Counsel of the Navy memorandum, dated June 11, 1998, subj: Allegations Regarding Operation TAILWIND.
2. HD Comment on SECDEF Memo of 9JUN98, w/enclosures.
3. Letter to Congressman Farr from Joseph L. Driscoll, dated June 22, 1998.
4. Other Navy Responses.



**THE JOINT STAFF
WASHINGTON, DC**

Reply ZIP Code:
20318-0300

DJSM 775-98
17 July 1998

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNDERSECRETARY OF DEFENSE (PERSONNEL
AND READINESS)**

Subject: Report of Operation TAILWIND

Attached is an unclassified version of the memorandum reporting the results of the review directed by the Secretary of Defense

Approved & Secured with Approval
by DENNIS C. BLAIR, 17 July 1998

DENNIS C. BLAIR
Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy
Director, Joint Staff

Enclosure



THE JOINT STAFF
WASHINGTON, DC

Reply ZIP Code:
20318-6000

17 July 1998

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR, JOINT STAFF

Subject: Report of Operation TAILWIND Review

1. This memorandum reports the results of the review conducted in response to the SecDef memorandum, 9 June 1998, "Allegations Regarding "Operation Tailwind" (Tab A).
2. Conduct of the review:
 - a. Contact was made with US Pacific Command (USPACOM), US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), all Joint Staff directorates, the Information Management Division (IMD), and the Chairman's Legal and Public Affairs offices. Agencies were tasked to conduct a review IAW with the directive in Secretary Cohen's memorandum. Official files including relevant historical files and retired records were searched. Participating agencies used an estimated 350 man-hours in the conduct of the review.
 - b. Reviews conducted by the following agencies found no evidence of the use of sarin gas or of the presence of US defectors during TAILWIND: J1, J3, J4, J5, J6, J7, J8, and the Legal and Public Affairs offices.
 - c. The review conducted by USPACOM found no evidence of the use of sarin gas or of the presence of US defectors during TAILWIND. The review located one document; Annex B, Studies and Observation Group, to the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, 1970, annual history. Since this document is available here, it was not forwarded by USPACOM.
 - d. The review conducted by USSOCOM found no evidence to support allegations of the use of sarin gas or of the presence of US defectors during TAILWIND. The following historical materials (Tab B) relating to TAILWIND accompanied the USSOCOM review report:

(1) Unclassified extract of 1970 MACV-SOG history discussing TAILWIND; it contains no mention of sarin gas or US defectors.

(2) Unclassified extracts from oral history interviews conducted by Dr. Richard Shultz with LTC Lawrence Trapp, LTC Jack Isler, LTC Ernest Hayes, and COL John F. Sadler, retired former members of MACV-SOG, which include discussion of TAILWIND or the use of CS gas.

(3) Tape cassette containing a copy of an alleged recording of Forward Air Controller radio communications during TAILWIND; it was given by SFC Denver Minton, a retired soldier who was on TAILWIND, to the USSOCOM Command Historian, Dr. John Partin. The tape has been furnished to Mr. William A. Davidson, Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Air Force, for enhancement and review (tape not included at Tab B).

e. The review conducted by DIA found no evidence of the use of sarin gas or of the presence of US defectors during TAILWIND. Since DIA files for the period have been retired to the Washington National Records Center (WNRC), DIA personnel performed a search of electronic databases for raw intelligence reports and finished intelligence retired to the WNRC. Records of six documents apparently originated by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) were located using the search term "Chavane." These reports were not retained in DIA historical files; report numbers are at Tab C. Agency historian's files and the relevant files of Director's correspondence at the WNRC were searched manually. Mr. Benny Meyer and Mr. Chris Guenther, who served as DIA Southeast Asia analysts in 1970, could not recall any reports regarding defectors or the use of sarin gas.

f. The review conducted by personnel of IMD found no evidence to support allegations of the use of sarin gas or of the presence of US defectors during TAILWIND. Joint Staff corporate records under the control of the IMD and the Chairman's files (Wheeler files), Record Group 218 (Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) held by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) were searched.

g. The review conducted by personnel of the Joint History Office found no evidence to support allegations of the use of sarin gas or of the presence of US defectors during TAILWIND. Phone interviews of former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) ADM Thomas H. Moorer, USN (Ret) on 17 June 1998 and former Director, Joint Staff, Gen John W. Vogt, USAF (Ret) on 18 June 1998 by Dr. Walter Poole revealed no new information

(MFR AT Tab D). Admiral Moorer said that he could not remember anything about TAILWIND; he also stated that he had no knowledge of the use of sarin gas or of the targeting of US defectors on TAILWIND. General Vogt had no memory of the use of sarin gas or of the killing of US defectors on TAILWIND. Vogt found the CNN story "absolutely unbelievable," and he categorically denied having received or issued instructions for the use of sarin gas or for the killing of US defectors.

3. Description of Operation TAILWIND:

a. It is useful to begin with a review of how policies on the use of non-lethal chemical agents were developed between 1965 and 1970. Senior civilian and military officials were constantly attentive to public opinion, carefully defined the conditions for using riot control agents (RCA), and always specified the types of gas authorized for use.

b. In January 1965, without publicity, RCA were used in operations by South Vietnamese personnel who operated dispensers aboard US helicopters. General William C. Westmoreland, Commander, US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV) had secured the US Ambassador's political clearance to carry the aerial dispensers. On 20-21 March, Associated Press photographer Horst Faas accompanied South Vietnamese troops in the field and saw them with gas masks and chemical grenades. Faas told AP reporter Peter Arnett who published a story mentioning South Vietnamese "experiments with gas" and non-lethal gas warfare. A public furor followed in the US, which the CJCS characterized as having "literally engulfed the entire government" for two days. The US Ambassador opposed further use of RCA. Westmoreland persuaded the commander of South Vietnamese forces to issue instructions prohibiting the use of RCA on the battlefield.

c. In April 1965, as the first US combat troops entered South Vietnam, the Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC) authorized GEN Westmoreland to employ RCA in accordance with authority granted by the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan. In July, during a background press briefing, the Secretary of Defense said that RCAs would not be used. On 9 September GEN Westmoreland—supported by the Ambassador—requested authority to use RCA for the specific purpose of clearing tunnels, caves, and underground, shelters encountered in tactical operations. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), on 10 September, recommended use of RCA in combat situations, subject only to the judgment of the tactical commander on the scene. On 26 October, the CJCS authorized Westmoreland to

employ CN and CS tear gas during a search and clear operation in one village. On 2 November, upon receiving presidential approval, the Chairman granted Westmoreland authority to use CS and CN tear gas at his discretion during military operations in South Vietnam. In practice, delegation of authority usually went to battalion level. Use of nausea producing agents DM and CN-DM was not authorized. The next expansion of authority occurred on 20 January 1968, when the Secretary of Defense approved using CS in Laos during combat air crew recovery operations.

d. During April and May 1969, there were two incidents in which US Marines encountered use of unknown chemical agents by the North Vietnamese; two Marines died. On 25 November 1969, through National Security Decision Memorandum 35, President Richard Nixon reaffirmed US renunciation of first use of lethal and incapacitating chemical weapons. He added, however, that this renunciation did not apply to RCA and herbicides.

e. The incursion into Cambodia by US and South Vietnamese forces took place during May and June 1970. To offset the damage inflicted upon supply routes and bases running through Cambodia the enemy sought to expand their control in southern Laos. They undertook to improve passage of supplies down the Ho Chi Minh Trail by attacking around the Bolovens Plateau to gain control of good dry weather roads and, during the rainy season, a river route into South Vietnam. About 5,000 indigenous personnel were available to disrupt enemy activities in Laos. Authority to use RCA in Cambodia and Laos was requested; it was subsequently granted by the National Command Authorities.

f. Ground operations in Laos had to be covert, so as not to openly violate the 1962 Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos which forbade the signatories which included the US and North Vietnam from introducing foreign troops or other military personnel in Laos. The Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Studies and Observation Group (SOG) was permitted to conduct certain types of operations in Laos as authorized by higher authorities in Washington, subject to the concurrence of the US Ambassador in Laos. The chain of command for SOG ran through COMUSMACV in Saigon to CINCPAC in Hawaii and then to the National Command Authorities in Washington.

g. Operation TAILWIND was undertaken for two reasons: to conduct a reconnaissance in force - an offensive operation to contact the enemy, and as a diversion in support of Operation GAUNTLET. TAILWIND was scheduled to begin on 3

September, but bad weather delayed it until 11 September. Helicopters inserted three platoons, with 120 indigenous and 16 US personnel, into the Chavane area of southern Laos.

h. The TAILWIND force, inserted under fire on 11 September, was almost constantly in contact with the enemy over the next 72 hours. Later on the 11th, the force discovered and destroyed an ammunition supply dump. On 12 September, the force engaged a platoon and then a company-size element. Tactical air support helped drive the enemy off. The force was heavily engaged throughout 13 September. On 14 September, while moving to the extraction landing zone, the force made contact with the enemy and overran a base camp. The extraction then took place under heavy small arms fire.

i. The script of the post-Tailwind briefing given by 1LT Robert Van Buskirk to GEN Creighton Abrams (COMUSMACV) at Kontum, a copy of which was received from Mr. Rudi Gresham (Tab E), states that (1) on 11 September tactical aircraft used "Rock-Eye" CBU in landing zone preparation and (2) that on 12 and 13 September tactical aircraft used CBU-25 against the enemy and (3) that on 14 September CBU-19 was used to prepare the area around the extraction landing zone. The briefing script refers to only enemy soldiers being killed during the seizure of a battalion-size camp on 14 September. (Only two US servicemen, Robert Garwood, USMC, and McKinley Nolan, USA, are known to have defected and joined enemy forces during the Vietnam War).

j. At every US military echelon, TAILWIND was rated a success. Friendly losses were three killed (all indigenous) and 49 wounded (including all US ground personnel on TAILWIND); one UH-1G and two CH-53 helicopters crashed. Enemy killed were estimated at 432 (288 by air and 144 by ground action). The primary gain from TAILWIND was the capture of documents that constituted the most significant intelligence yet found about the activities of the 559th Transportation Group. Another benefit was the diversion of enemy forces operating on the Bolovens Plateau. Despite the success of TAILWIND, the effort to reduce the US role in operations and to give indigenous forces an even larger role meant that there was no repetition of TAILWIND.

4. Conclusions: Extensive search and review of available records and interviews with ADM Moorer and Gen Vogt have failed to find any material to support the allegations that a military operation in Laos called "Operation TAILWIND" was directed toward US military defectors or that sarin nerve gas was used during the operation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. A. Armstrong", with a stylized flourish at the end.

DAVID A. ARMSTRONG
Brigadier General, USA (Ret)
Director Joint History Office

L

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

15 July 1998

The Honorable William S. Cohen
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Room 3E880
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Pursuant to the direction of the CIA's Executive Director, we have completed an exhaustive search for any information regarding the recent media allegations concerning Operation TAILWIND.

I have been authorized to provide the attached detailed statement regarding our efforts and results. As stated therein, the CIA found no information to support the allegations that the military activity identified as Operation TAILWIND was intended to take, or in fact took, any action against American deserters, or was intended to employ, or in fact employed, sarin nerve gas. This unclassified statement may be included in any public report on this matter which your Department may issue.

You may also wish to note that we have also completed action on all document referrals made pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) on this subject and have returned same to your designated FOIA focal point office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lee S. Strickland".

Lee S. Strickland
Information and Privacy Coordinator

Attachment:
as stated.



Washington, D.C. 20505

**Unclassified Statement
of the
Central Intelligence Agency
regarding "Operation TAILWIND"**

The Central Intelligence Agency has now completed an exhaustive search for any information to support the media allegations that the United States had used Sarin nerve gas 28 years ago in Laos in a "behind the lines" military action known as "Operation TAILWIND" and/or that the purpose of Operation TAILWIND was, at least in part, to locate and kill American deserters.

The CIA's efforts included thorough searches in the operational and analytical directorates of the CIA as well as the Office of the Director of Central Intelligence and our history staff. In addition, knowledgeable civilian and military personnel, including the senior CIA representatives in Vientiane (Laos) at that time, were contacted for their personal recollections.

Although we identified several documents which contained references to Operation TAILWIND, we found no information whatsoever to support either of the media allegations. In addition, none of the individuals contacted had any knowledge of the use of poison gas either in support of allied or US military forces or against US deserters.

In conclusion, all records available to the CIA establish that Operation TAILWIND was exclusively a military operation which included reconnaissance (e.g., area recon), monitoring (e.g., roadwatch), and exploitation (e.g., document capture or destruction of supplies) activities in Communist-held areas of Laos. Certainly, a major if not key objective was to identify and interdict Communist supplies moving from North Vietnam while a subsidiary objective was to provide diversionary relief to Laotian irregulars. The CIA found no information to support the allegations that Operation TAILWIND was intended to take, or in fact took, any action against American deserters, or was intended to employ, or in fact employed, sarin nerve gas.

13 July 1998

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SUMMARY OF TELEPHONE INTERVIEW WITH
THE HONORABLE MELVIN LAIRD
FORMER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

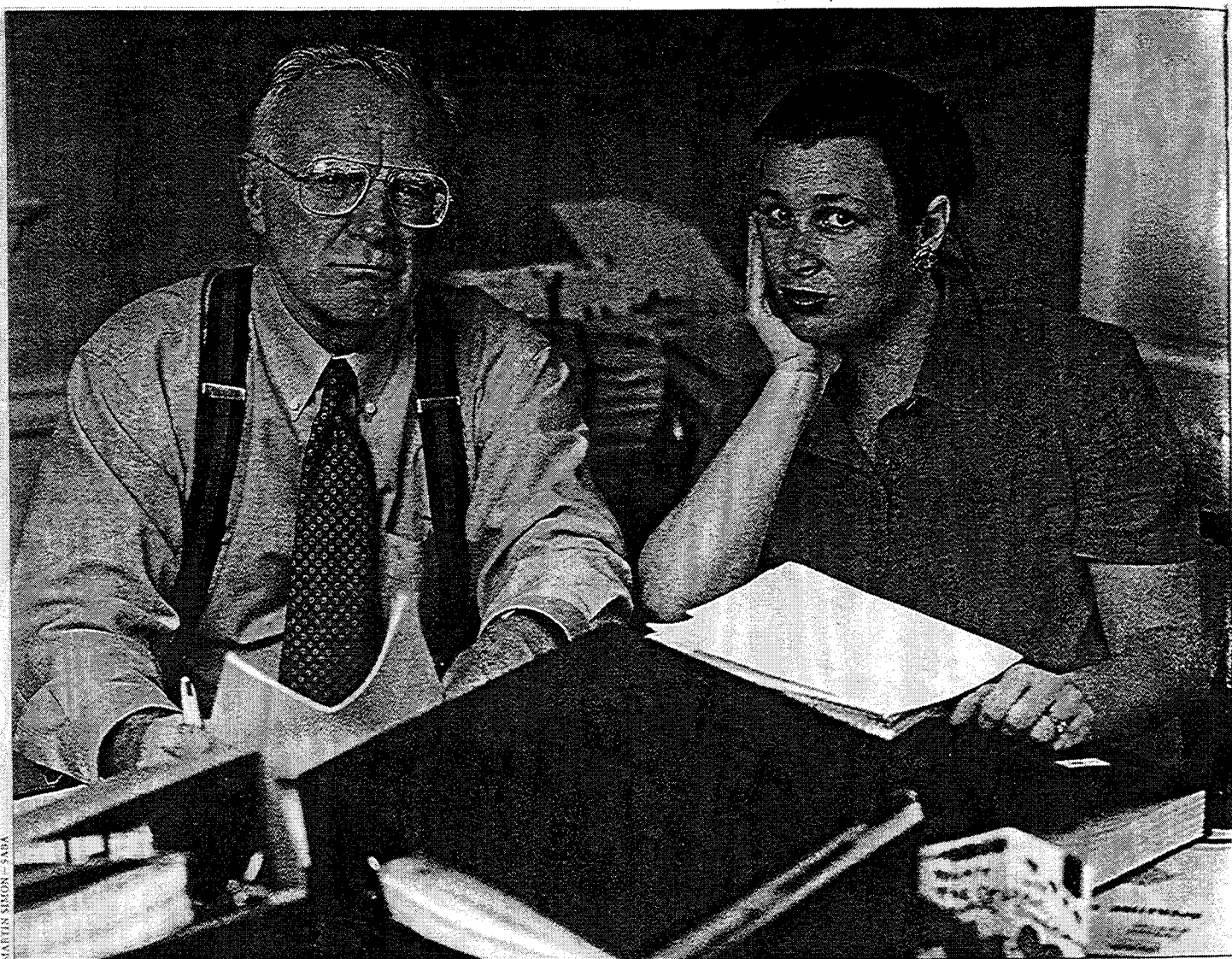
On July 14, 1998, Colonel Thomas G. Bowman, USMCR, spoke with Secretary Laird to discuss Operation Tailwind. Secretary Laird indicated that he had a brief (approximately four minute) conversation with a journalist regarding Operation Tailwind and the use of Sarin gas.

Secretary Laird informed the journalist that he never authorized or was asked to authorize the use of Sarin gas while he was Secretary of Defense (1969-1973). Secretary Laird was aware of the fact that Sarin gas was located on Okinawa. He had no knowledge of Sarin gas being used at any time associated with operations "in theater." "In theater" meant any of the bases and installations in the Pacific area (Guam, Okinawa, etc.) area that were being used to support the Vietnam War. To the best of his knowledge none of the Sarin gas located on Okinawa was ever transported to Vietnam or any other location in Southeast Asia.

During the conversation the journalist read him portions of a transcript of a taped conversation between the journalist and ADM Thomas Moorer, USN, (Ret.), former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, regarding the alleged use of Sarin gas during the Operation Tailwind. As read to him the comments seemed to indicate that ADM Moorer confirmed that Sarin gas was used. When asked for his comment regarding the information from the transcript, Secretary Laird indicated that he thought the allegation regarding the use of Sarin was "...was ridiculous. I met with ADM Moorer every afternoon at about 4:30 to discuss the operations in Vietnam. I have no recollection of him ever speaking to me about authorizing the use of Sarin. I would have had to approve such action."

Secretary Laird closed the conversation indicating that he thought very highly of the Special Forces and was proud of their accomplishments in Vietnam.





THE PRESS

Fallout From a Media Fiasco

The public's faith in the press may be at a new low. A behind-the-scenes look at a CNN-Time blunder over nerve gas helps explain why.

BY EVAN THOMAS AND
GREGORY L. VISTICA

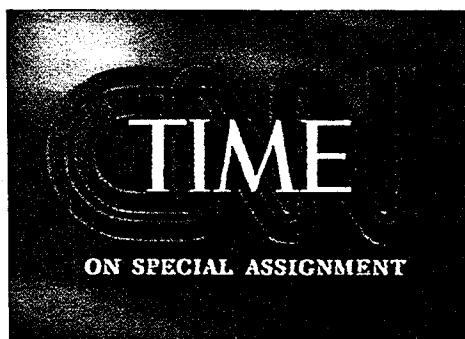
APRIL OLIVER, FORMER COLUMBIA, S.C., debutante, would-be Olympic swimmer, Princeton graduate and, until two weeks ago, CNN producer, has long exuded self-confidence. She still does, even though she's being largely blamed for what her ex-boss, CNN News

Group chairman Tom Johnson, calls a "fiasco." "Valley of Death," the shocking story Oliver produced for the June 7 premiere of "NewsStand: CNN & Time," has been repudiated by both CNN and Time. Next week the Pentagon expects to issue a report stating that there is no evidence to support Oliver's story that U.S. forces used deadly sarin gas on a mission called Operation Tailwind to kill American de-

fectors in Laos in 1970. Yet last week Oliver marched from talk show to talk show ("Crossfire," "Charlie Rose," "Good Morning America") to stand by her story. She scolded reporters who questioned her command of "black ops" and proclaimed herself to be the victim of a corporate "whitewash." CNN and Time, she charged, had caved in to a top-level military conspiracy to cover up the truth.



The players: CNN producers Jack Smith and April Oliver (left) were fired over a report that CNN and Time now say was wrong; Arnett, the correspondent (above), was reprimanded—but kept his job



The fallout from Tailwind has helped drive the press's credibility to what may be a record low. According to the new NEWSWEEK Poll, 61 percent of the public knew of the CNN-Time story, the latest in a series of recent press stumbles, from fabricated stories by a young reporter in The New Republic to manufactured quotes by a Boston Globe columnist. More than half (53 percent) of Americans characterize news reporting today as "often inaccurate," and 76 percent say the race for ratings and profits have driven the media "too far" in the direction of entertainment rather than traditional reporting. The story of what went wrong on the nerve-gas report is a cautionary tale that sheds light on many of the forces that appear to be cutting into the public's faith in the press. The culprits include the headlong pursuit of "buzz" in a crowded, 24-hour-a-day news cycle, the pressure for higher ratings and the dubious promise of corporate

synergy. In Atlanta, CNN's top management was counting on a smashing first night for its new show, "NewsStand." April Oliver seems to have succumbed to the temptation—familiar to too many reporters—of mistaking digging for discovery.

In newsrooms across the country, the prevailing mood can be described as justifiable paranoia. As soon as they finish ridiculing their competitors for their mistakes, reporters are asking: are we next? The fear and loathing was on display at CNN last week, where many staffers clamored for Peter Arnett to be fired for his part in "Valley of Death." Because Arnett's reporting role was small and his past accomplishments are great, he escaped getting sacked. But other big-name correspondents fumed that Arnett's refusal to take responsibility made them all look bad. "I'm not just a pretty face—with a beard," said CNN's Wolf Blitzer.

A NEWSWEEK Poll: The Media's Credibility Gap

The public is growing more and more skeptical about the press's trustworthiness. The numbers:

Where do you get most of your news about current events?

- 61% Television
- 24% Newspapers
- 8% Radio
- 1% Magazines
- 2% Internet or online services

How much of what you see, hear or read in the news media do you think you can believe?

- 11% Almost all of it
- 35% Most of it
- 42% Only some
- 11% Very little

Have recent media mergers improved the quality and accuracy of news reporting, or have they made it worse?

- 14% Improved quality and accuracy
- 35% Made it worse
- 46% Not much effect

Do news organizations get the facts straight or are they often inaccurate?

- 39% Get facts straight
- 53% Often inaccurate

Oliver's former colleagues describe her as ethical and extremely hardworking. She can be at once charming and driven. "She was always going after the big fish," says Dan Werner, an executive at the company that produces PBS's "The NewsHour," where Oliver worked from 1989 to 1994. But according to another former boss, she has a slight penchant for conspiracy theories. And working chiefly as a booker and producer for talk shows, she had done little real investigative reporting on military affairs before embarking on a highly promoted exposé that would, in effect, accuse the United States of committing a war crime. The fact that no regular staffer at CNN challenged her overall thesis until after it was proved wrong says much about the casual (and usually false) assumption that the U.S. military routinely ordered atrocities in the Vietnam War.

Though it attracted little attention at the time, Oliver's first big story on secret operations in Vietnam was probably also off-base. Last September, CNN aired a charge by a former Special Forces team leader that U.S. B-52s bombed American soldiers who were secretly and illegally operating in Laos; the alleged reason was to prevent the soldiers from being captured. "The notion that Americans would kill other Americans to maintain deniability is preposterous," says Brian Jenkins, a Vietnam-era Special

Forces officer and consultant hired by CNN to examine the allegations in "Valley of Death" after it aired.

While reporting that first story, Oliver heard accounts that nerve gas had been used during secret operations in Laos. She began immersing herself in old manuals from chemical-weapons arsenals and tracking down veterans of long-ago black ops. Oliver, 36, mastered the lingo of special operations, but she needed help judging the credibility of the operators. Old Special Forces warriors sometimes spin tales. One of Oliver's key sources, Lt. Robert Van Buskirk, now a prison minister in North Carolina, speaks in vivid parables that have a way of evolving over time. Van Buskirk told Oliver he had killed a Russian defector. A few months later, he recalled that the victim was an American defector. When he was debriefed right after the mission, according to a document obtained



Synergy and sarin:

CNN/USA president Rick Kaplan, who was brought in from ABC to boost ratings



Going Too Far?

In competition for ratings and profits, have the news media gone too far in the direction of entertainment and away from traditional reporting?

76% Yes, gone too far

20% No, not too far

Compared with the past, is journalists' reporting today more likely, less likely or about as likely to be influenced by:

71% Competitive pressure from other journalists for a story

77% Pressure from media owners and news executives for higher ratings and profits

70% A desire to become a celebrity or make money from personal fame

33% A desire to report the news fairly and accurately

Are recent cases of media inaccuracy isolated incidents, or do they make you less likely to trust the media's reporting?

30% Isolated incidents

62% Less likely to trust media

by NEWSWEEK, he mentioned neither.

Oliver was essentially on her own for the first several months of reporting last fall and winter, but in March she gained the full attention of senior producer Jack Smith. A former CBS Washington bureau chief, Smith is a respected news hand. "I had both my dukes up on this story," Smith says, but it is not hard to be overwhelmed by Oliver, who likes to demonstrate her superior knowledge of technical detail. During an interview with NEWSWEEK last week, she pointedly inquired, "Have you pulled the [Pentagon's] chemical manuals for 1970 yet?"

Oliver should have had guidance from one of the most experienced Vietnam correspondents of them all, Peter Arnett, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his war reporting in 1966. Earlier this year, Oliver called Arnett and said, "I've got a great one. Do you want to be part of it?" Arnett said yes. He joined Oliver's team for a couple of interviews last spring—but then got on a plane to make a speech in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. "I looked at April's sources and I didn't have too much trouble with them," he told NEWSWEEK when the story first appeared. (He did not return NEWSWEEK's calls last week.)

At CNN headquarters in Atlanta, the pressure was on for higher ratings.

Last year ABC News's Rick Kaplan was hired to pep up the network. His answer, in part, was to get rid of "talking heads" shows and promote hard-hitting reporting. CNN lacks the assets of top shows like "60 Minutes." But Kaplan hoped to achieve "synergy" by coproducing programming with CNN's corporate partner, Time Warner. The result was "NewsStand"—produced each night with a different Time Inc. magazine.

Time staffers, however, were barely aware that CNN was working on a story about Tailwind. In New York, a few top Time editors were shown a copy of a 156-page briefing book prepared by Oliver and Smith two weeks before the broadcast, but, according to Time sources, no real effort was made to check her reporting. At CNN, the regular Pentagon correspondent, Jamie McIntyre, didn't see a script of the show until eight days before it aired. He sent Oliver an e-mail raising some questions, but was brushed back. "She had all the answers," says McIntyre.

In Atlanta, senior executive producer Pam Hill was impressed by the confidential sources in Oliver and Smith's briefing book. Kaplan apparently did not read the book, but he was comforted by assurances about the reporting from Hill and Smith.

Kaplan had once worked for Smith as a cub reporter in Chicago and counted himself as a family friend. One of Smith's children refers to Kaplan as "Uncle Rick." According to informed sources, Tom Johnson felt some last-minute qualms about "Valley of Death," but let the show go on. It had already been heavily advertised for five days before broadcast. (Johnson and Kaplan declined to talk directly to NEWSWEEK but answered questions through a spokesman.)

As soon as "Valley of Death" appeared, Johnson began hearing from friends in high places, including Gen. Colin Powell, who told him that CNN had been duped. Johnson says he twice offered his resignation. When Oliver's reporting came under heavy attack from other news organizations like NEWSWEEK, Johnson and Kaplan decided to bring in outside investigators under lawyer Floyd Abrams. At first, Oliver and Smith hoped that Abrams would vindicate them; they wrote a 19-page report responding to their critics. On Wednesday, July 1, Smith was summoned to Atlanta. Accord-

ing to Smith, Kaplan leaned over and told his old mentor, "Jack, you know I'd follow you to the grave." The next day Abrams's report arrived, recommending that CNN and Time retract the story. Oliver and Smith were fired when they refused to resign. Kaplan publicly complained that he had been misled by his own team. Time, meanwhile, had conducted its own investigation and concluded the whole story was bogus.

According to a knowledgeable source, the Pentagon is now declassifying documents showing that sarin gas was never moved from its storage bunkers on Okinawa during the Vietnam War. Meanwhile, at a Sun Valley, Idaho, conference attended by top media and entertainment moguls last week, Rupert Murdoch, owner of the News Corp. (Fox TV), attacked Gerald Levin of Time Warner. Murdoch suggested the Time-CNN nerve-gas report was "politically motivated." Levin responded that he took "great offense" at Murdoch's comment. Later, someone from the audience cried out to Levin, "Why didn't you fire Peter Arnett?" CNN founder Ted Turner told TV critics the nerve-gas story had hurt him more than his own father's death. The public outrage is beginning to be felt even at the top. ■

2ND STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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The Atlanta Journal and Constitution

July 12, 1998, Sunday, ALL EDITIONS

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 04A

LENGTH: 879 words

SERIES: Final

HEADLINE: Producer Oliver speaks out about firing from CNN Making the rounds:
Journalist is waging a media campaign to tell her side of the Operation
Tailwind controversy.

BYLINE: Bob Dart

DATELINE: Washington

BODY:

For April Oliver, another day of infamy begins at 7:35 a.m. when a long car with soft leather seats arrives to take the fired CNN producer to be interviewed on the Canadian Broadcasting Corp.'s morning news show. "I've become the poster child for sloppy journalism," Oliver laments. It is not a title she will accept meekly. Newly unemployed and expecting her second child within weeks, the 36-year-old producer has stepped out from behind the camera to wage a desperate media campaign to salvage her career. In the process, she is taking on the U.S. military establishment and the Time Warner empire, which includes CNN.

Oliver and senior producer Jack Smith were fired for the story on CNN's "NewsStand" and in Time magazine alleging that a secret U.S. commando unit went into Laos in 1970 to kill American defectors from the Vietnam War and that nerve gas was dropped on enemy forces to enable the commandos to escape.

When current and Vietnam-era military officials attacked its accuracy, CNN called in attorney Floyd Abrams to examine the report on "Operation Tailwind." He concluded the main allegations were not substantiated, and CNN and Time issued effusive retractions and apologies.

"I stand by the story," Oliver told Canadian TV viewers Thursday.

Throughout the day, she repeated her defiant defense countless times into her dining room phone to a succession of radio talk show hosts and print reporters. A few blocks away, a similar refrain was being voiced by her neighbor and former colleague Smith --- a 62-year-old broadcast veteran who was CBS' Washington bureau chief before going to CNN.

"We're responding, now that a two-week gag imposed by CNN has been lifted," Smith said. "It's a pity that CNN executives simply caved in to pressure" from the Pentagon and other officials. "They wanted the story to die. And they hanged us, too." The CNN termination was --- to say the least --- an unexpected detour in a lifetime of overachievement for Oliver, a South Carolina native and the

great-great-granddaughter of Confederate Gen. Wade Hampton.

A childhood swimming champion, she entered Princeton University at 16. She took time off to work on Ronald Reagan's 1980 campaign and at an Afghani refugee camp in Pakistan before graduating cum laude in 1983. She was a free-lance journalist for five years and a reporter for the "MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour" for another five before joining CNN in 1994.

The media operation to restore her good name is a family affair.

Before the firing, Oliver said, CNN had told her and Smith not to talk to reporters. Immediately afterward, though, April's father, Wade Hampton Oliver, bought a fax machine and stayed up until 2 a.m. sending news organizations copies of a letter his daughter wrote to CNN President Rick Kaplan complaining of her treatment.

The senior Olivers had come to Washington from their hometown of Columbia for a duplicate bridge tournament. April's mother, Ellen, remained as an informal booking agent after the faxes inspired scores of interview requests. "It became apparent that April couldn't get to interviews and answer the phone," she explained. "And I had to see that she had proper meals. She is expecting." Indeed, Oliver has a Caesarean section scheduled for July 28 and interrupts her interviews for an afternoon nap. Given three months' severance pay, she hopes her CNN medical insurance will cover the delivery.

Her husband, Jay Schulkin, is a neuroscientist who has been supportive and then some, said Oliver. "He wants to hit somebody."

Their 6-year-old daughter, Danielle, is delighted to have her mommy home all day. She is less enthusiastic about the constant phone calls that disrupt play.

"I'm trying to preserve the integrity of the story by getting as many facts out as possible," Oliver tells a radio interviewer.

The best way to restore her reputation, of course, would be an independent confirmation of her report. Over and over, she tells interviewers of her disappointment that other reporters are pursuing the "media story" rather than trying to find out more about Operation Tailwind.

Oliver recalls her dismay about a story in The Washington Post that "lumped my piece in with all these pieces of fiction" --- recent journalistic scandals in which Boston Globe columnist Patricia Smith and New Republic writer Stephen Glass admitted making up sources.

"For me, that was a killer," said Oliver. "Those weren't actors that we had doing on-camera interviews."

It took a lot of courage for survivors of Tailwind to come forward and tell their stories on TV, she said. Comparing the report to fiction "is an insult to them and to broadcast journalism."

She knew the Tailwind story would generate intense criticism, and prepared a detailed briefing book for her bosses at CNN about her sourcing and the coming firestorm.

"I expected controversy, but I didn't expect this much controversy," she said. "I certainly didn't expect to be without a job."

Oliver said she was given a choice: Acknowledge mistakes in the Tailwind report and "resign with dignity" or "be terminated immediately."

Sticking by the story, she chose termination.

Some time after the baby comes, she hopes to begin some free-lance projects.

GRAPHIC: Photo :

In front of the cameras: "I'm trying to preserve the integrity of the story by getting as many facts out as possible," April Oliver says. /
RICK McKAY / Washington Bureau

LOAD-DATE: July 13, 1998

4TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1998 The Houston Chronicle Publishing Company
The Houston Chronicle

July 12, 1998, Sunday 2 STAR EDITION

SECTION: OUTLOOK; Pg. 1

LENGTH: 1046 words

HEADLINE: Operation Tailwind;
CNN's ideology showing in its nerve-gas debacle

BYLINE: STEVE SHERMAN; Sherman, a Houstonian, served in the 5th Special Forces Group in Vietnam in 1967-68. He is the author/compiler of several reference books on U.S. Army Special Forces in Southeast Asia, including 'Who's Who' from MACV-SOG.

BODY:

REGARDLESS of your feelings about the Vietnam War, let me make something perfectly clear (to borrow a phrase reminiscent of the period):

Contrary to Cable News Network's reports, there was no Sarin gas used in Operation Tailwind, a covert operation in Southeast Asia from Sept. 11-14, 1970. Indeed, CNN's story is contradicted by the participants, the documents, the enemy, the enemy's documents and the overwhelming illogic behind any assumption that Sarin gas was used.

Reporters, producers, editors, commentators and media executives who reported, or continue to report, to the contrary are either ideologues with an agenda or grossly ignorant of the military arts. Perhaps both. In either event, such persons should not be entrusted with reporting news to you and to the citizens of 180 other nations.

For their misreporting, the producers of the Tailwind story, April Oliver and Jack Smith, have been fired by CNN. Yet they claim to stand by their story. Media attorney Floyd Abrams' follow-up report commissioned by the network stated, "The CNN journalists involved in this project believed in every word they wrote. If anything, the serious flaws in the broadcast that we identify in this report may stem from the depths of those beliefs and the degree to which the journalists discounted contrary information they received precisely because they were so firmly persuaded that what they were broadcasting was true."

In simpler terms, Oliver approached the story with too great a bias to consider any contrary point of view. That makes her an ideologue. Jack Smith may be "reality-challenged."

Veteran war correspondent Peter Arnett, who appeared on the broadcast, still works for CNN. Arnett declared that "I contributed not one comma" to the story. He said he had helped build CNN's reputation and that he was "not going to let my reputation go down the tubes" over the controversy. He said he was "shocked" to hear his job was on the line, as widely reported last week.

On the other hand Oliver, his producer, said Arnett "would not have been associated with this project at all if he didn't believe that it was credible based on his Vietnam experience, based on his own experience of breaking stories having to do with poison gas in Vietnam. He certainly did participate and did three of the principal interviews."

It was Arnett's name and ostensible expertise that was used to "sell" the show on the network's Newsstand program. His motivation appears to have been to revive a flagging career with a sensational and controversial story. In his autobiography, Arnett cites an incident when he protested a totally fabricated story in a competing Australian newspaper. His mentor told him, "Son, if you're going to make it in the news business around here you've got to learn how to compete."

He seems to have taken the lesson to heart. Last week, CNN let its star off with a reprimand. This is not enough. Oliver and Smith may have believed their story out of ignorance, but Arnett went along with it, knowing it was a lie.

During the Persian Gulf War, Tom Johnson, the CNN chairman, hired two military analysts "because nowhere on the CNN staff was there anybody who had the needed expertise, background and understanding related to military strategy and combat." After the war, CNN continued to employ Army Maj. Gen. Perry M. Smith as its military affairs adviser. The development of the program on Sarin gas was intentionally hidden from Smith. When he warned CNN executives of problems with the story, he was ignored. To his credit, Gen. Smith resigned in protest; to their discredit, CNN executives stood by their story.

For their part in this, the anchors for the Newsstand show, Jeff Greenfield and Bernard Shaw, should receive reprimands, and CNN President Rick Kaplan ought to be fired. These people must take responsibility for what they say or put on the air. There are some other reporters/executives/producers into the same boat. By continuing to stand by Peter Arnett and the other pseudopprofessionals responsible for this atrocious story, Tom Johnson and CNN appear to be setting no threshold for integrity.

CNN founder Ted Turner created the network to be "a positive force in a world where cynics abound," an organization that would "hopefully bring together in brotherhood and kindness and peace the people of this nation and this world." Over the years, Turner has parlayed CNN into an effective controlling interest in the media giant Time-Warner.

Time-Warner controls one of the three foremost news magazines, Time. Through HBO, TNT, TBS, TCM and even Turner's Cartoon Network, Time-Warner finances and disseminates programming on political issues dear to Mr. and Mrs. Turner's heart. The power of the Time-Warner empire thus makes honest reporting even more critical.

Who is hurt by this dishonesty in reporting? All of us.

Despite CNN's retraction, there are people who will use this reporting to justify, and perhaps act upon, their perception of the United States as the Great Satan. It will make it more difficult for the soldiers, sailors and airmen, present and future, who defend your freedoms, to accomplish their

mission.

This CNN report has portrayed veterans who defended freedom as war criminals. It is ironic that CNN issued its retraction almost exactly 10 years to the date that Mrs. Ted Turner (then and now remembered as "Hanoi Jane" Fonda) made her apology for calling these same veterans "war criminals."

Both of these apologies failed to address the underlying dishonesty of the charges. Fonda believed that the U.S. intervention in Vietnam was evil and the North Vietnamese were "heroic, gentle, far-seeing patriots." The show's discredited producer, Oliver, apparently believes the United States used Sarin gas to kill other Americans, risking the lives of friendly forces in the process.

In contrast, most of the 3 million men and women who served in Vietnam, and the more than 58,000 who died there, did so in the belief that we were defending our country and its principles of freedom.

When you are CNN - or any other media outlet - and you deliberately twist facts to make a mockery of truth, as is the case in the Tailwind story, you have subverted the press' First Amendment right.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

TYPE: Editorial Opinion

LOAD-DATE: July 13, 1998

5TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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The New York Post

July 12, 1998, Sunday

SECTION: News; Pg. 004

LENGTH: 272 words

HEADLINE: FIRED STAFF RIPS NETWORK "WHITEWASH"

BYLINE: Maggie Haberman

BODY:

CNN staffers who put together the Operation Tailwind story reportedly accused the network of "corporate whitewash" in secretly taped phone calls the morning the piece was retracted.

A conference call among staff members at CNN's "Newsstand" show has producers claiming they became scapegoats, Fox News Channel's "Drudge" show reported last night.

Top CNN executives "have gagged us. They have deceived us, and they have misled us," charged senior producer Jack Smith, according to Matt Drudge.

Smith, along with producer April Oliver, was fired over the story about U.S. troops using the nerve gas sarin in 1970 against U.S. defectors.

John Connor, who became acting executive producer of "Newsstand" after the bloodletting, reportedly said CNN was retracting the story because "we're going to try and kill this thing."

The network's bosses wanted to "drive a stake through 'the story's_ heart and bury it so it's gone," Connor reportedly said.

In an internal report, media lawyer Floyd Abrams criticized the news gathering done for the story, saying key details were excluded.

In the taped phone call, Oliver was livid.

"Every time they hit on us in that Abrams report, it's for something we excluded," Oliver reportedly told Connor.

"When you came to us this past spring, you told us to do a 14-minute piece," Oliver allegedly said.

"That's right," Connor reportedly replied.

"So, how come we're being fired for not including all these things that we

couldn't possibly fit into a 14-minute piece?" Oliver is said to have asked.

"April, you're asking the unanswerable," Connor reportedly answered.
LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: July 12, 1998

7TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1998 The Washington Post
The Washington Post

July 12, 1998, Sunday, Final Edition

SECTION: OP-ED; Pg. C07

LENGTH: 1326 words

HEADLINE: I Produced That Program -- And Was Fired

BYLINE: April Oliver

BODY:

The backlash was swift because the story wasn't pretty. Nerve gas. American defectors. A killing mission on neutral territory. A secret war with secret weapons. It inflamed old passions, creating another showdown between the military and the press over the great wound of our national psyche -- Vietnam.

I produced that program over an eight-month period. It was a challenge: The very nature of a black operation is that its existence is concealed. But by the end, we were solid with the facts.

We predicted the attack against the broadcast would be swift and brutal, the tactic -- kill the messenger, in this case, me. The goal -- kill the story. The Special Forces Association set out to savage the report. The onslaught included private pressure on the CNN executive suite from such luminaries as Henry Kissinger, Colin Powell and Richard Helms. Meanwhile, CNN management muzzled me and my coproducers, forbidding us to speak to the press so we could defend the story.

In a strategy conference call, Rick Kaplan, the CNN America president, announced to the team of producers that "this is not a journalism problem, this is a PR problem." He said that he did not want this controversy to result in congressional hearings, with 3,000 members of the establishment on one side of the room and the Special Forces soldiers on CNN's side of the room.

Prior to the broadcast, we took the extraordinary step of allowing a former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Thomas Moorer, to read the script, to reconfirm its accuracy. After a careful review of the script and Time magazine draft -- both of which said he confirmed the story -- he signed off on them. Adm. Moorer was not the only person who read the script before it went on the air. Two confidential sources with knowledge of the mission read the script and confirmed its accuracy.

Now, after little more than one week of review, the report by lawyers Floyd Abrams and David Kohler has concluded that the broadcast is insupportable. After their cursory review of the interview transcripts and tapes, Abrams and Kohler refused to meet with me and senior producer Jack Smith to be interviewed about them. Then, without allowing Jack Smith and me to review and comment on the Abrams/Kohler report, as Mr. Kohler had promised, CNN released the report and retracted the story.

The Abrams/Kohler report has major flaws that call into question its integrity. These include the following:

In its conclusion that "the substance of Admiral Moorer's interviews" does not confirm the broadcast, the Abrams/Kohler report wrongly disregards Moorer's pre-broadcast approval of the script. Furthermore, while the Abrams/Kohler report quotes extensively from the first introductory off-camera interview with the admiral when he had still not decided how much to cooperate with CNN, it virtually ignores the third off-camera interview, in which the admiral confirms the following: that the target of Tailwind was a group of defectors and that sarin nerve gas was widely available for search and rescue missions in Laos.

After the Pentagon's post-broadcast contact with Moorer, the admiral distanced himself from the broadcast. After hearing of this, Jack Smith and I met with Moorer to ask him to explain his wavering. He looked at me and said that people today just don't understand the context of the times back then. He emphasized that because he appeared on the program, friends and colleagues believed he was the commander who authorized the use of sarin nerve gas. He was embarrassed by this and wanted people to understand that he was not the authorizer. He only learned of it later. He was just the first of our sources to come under undue pressure from the military establishment.

Much has been made of the admiral's advanced age. But even the Abrams/Kohler report states that his memory is satisfactory. His memory is not just satisfactory, it's excellent.

The Abrams/Kohler report has been represented by CNN as an "independent" investigation. But the report was far from independent. Its co-author, David Kohler, is CNN's general counsel and had read and approved the "Valley of Death" script and the second report a week later. He works at the beck and call of CNN's executives, and he should never have been allowed to serve as co-investigator.

The Abrams/Kohler report also suggests that the producers skewed the piece. During the course of our reporting, we asked many people who today have expressed critical or negative views to sit for on-camera interviews. Most declined. These include: former national security adviser Henry Kissinger, former CIA director Richard Helms, former SOG commander John Sadler, and one of the pilots who flew gas that day, who, significantly, cited legal concerns.

The broadcast, however, did include the statements of Capt. Eugene McCarley, the leader of the Tailwind mission that he "never, ever considered the use of lethal gas, not on any of my operations" and that the mission of the operation was not to kill defectors but that the troops had stumbled upon the village base camp "by accident." The story also noted that a pilot said he was told in a briefing that it was just tear gas. In the final cut of the piece that we sent to Atlanta, we included that pilot saying, on camera, precisely that, but CNN management, at the last minute, took it out because of time constraints resulting from Rick Kaplan's insertion of a colorful contextual paragraph into the piece.

Another flaw with the Abrams/Kohler report was its upholding of the "repressed memory" canard, put forward in recent reports to discredit the story. But there was no pop-psych journalism at play here. In my first call to former

lieutenant Robert Van Buskirk, he said that he had killed a Russian. In the next interview, he said that at first he thought the man he killed was a turncoat but later learned he was a Russian. When I interviewed Van Buskirk again, he stated that he is and was convinced that the man was American. Van Buskirk said that his colonel in 1970 had told him to expunge the killing from his after action report, not to mention the killing to anyone and that the man killed was probably a Russian.

This is not repressed memory, this is unpeeling the layers of cover stories that go hand-in-hand with a black operation. Furthermore, I asked Van Buskirk, "Do you remember being briefed about Longshadows?" and he responded, "Longshadows, boy, that rings a bell. That's what we called caucasians." In that same conversation he stated, "[B]oy that term longshadows brings back memories. That was a code name for defectors. I think it was a nickname the [Montagnards] gave us." This is not repressed memory, this is a former lieutenant's reaction to a reporter's question about a military code name from 28 years ago.

The Abrams/Kohler report suggests we should have mentioned a book Van Buskirk wrote titled "Tailwind." In its retraction broadcast, CNN stated this book was "about" the secret mission. It is not. It is a profile of Van Buskirk's life journey toward God, and in its 200-plus pages, it includes only one short chapter on Operation Tailwind. As the Abrams/Kohler report notes but dismisses without explanation, Van Buskirk told me that when he wrote the book in 1983 he was not inclined to reveal the top-secret lethal war gas.

The Abrams/Kohler report was delivered to support a corporate whitewash, driven by executive fear, to avoid further controversy in the press, with the Pentagon and on Capitol Hill. One of the primary reasons CNN sacrificed this story was to protect its relationship with the Pentagon.

Tragically, the CNN retraction, driven by enormous pressure and a hasty star chamber investigation, will paralyze further reporting of these serious matters and of other past and, more important, future black operations by America's secret army.

The writer is a former producer for CNN.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: July 12, 1998

36TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1998 News World Communications, Inc.
The Washington Times

July 9, 1998, Thursday, Final Edition

SECTION: Part A; NATION; Pg. A4

LENGTH: 794 words

HEADLINE: CNN executives spare Arnett's job;
Network revisits anchor's role in sarin story

BYLINE: Rowan Scarborough; THE WASHINGTON TIMES

BODY:

CNN correspondent Peter Arnett kept his job yesterday after a day of explaining how he should not be blamed for the network's story, since retracted and apologized for, that U.S. forces tried to kill American deserters with deadly nerve gas in Vietnam 28 years ago.

Two reporters were fired for their part, but CNN Chairman Tom Johnson said the reprimand he gave Mr. Arnett, the network's "star," was enough.

"Peter Arnett's reprimand stands," he said at the end of an eight-hour deliberation. "No further personnel actions are planned."

It was not clear what Mr. Arnett was reprimanded for, since the network apparently accepted his explanation - presented in an eight-page brief he had written the night before - asserting that he had had only minimal participation in the broadcast.

A CNN executive said the reporter met for three hours with Mr. Johnson, CNN International President Eason Jordan and other CNN executives. Afterward, the executives met alone, then announced a verdict shortly before 5 p.m.

"Tom decided what we believed to be the case last Thursday was indeed the case," the executive said. "Pete's role in the report was so minimal as to warrant a reprimand but no more severe action."

Mr. Arnett told the Associated Press: "They required me to adequately explain my part in the story. They clearly were convinced that my presentation explained the limited nature of my role in the preparation of the story."

Mr. Arnett's day was a humiliating one for him, given his star status at the 24-hour news network. He is highly regarded by CNN managers for his exclusive reports from Baghdad during the Persian Gulf war, though U.S. military officers and members of Congress accused him of spreading propaganda for Saddam Hussein. He gave extensive uncritical coverage to Saddam's claim that U.S. bombers had destroyed a factory that bottled milk for babies. The wreckage was in fact the headquarters of an Iraqi intelligence unit whose coded signals had

been intercepted by U.S. monitors.

He was a reporter and narrator for a June 7 report on the "television magazine" program, "NewsStand: CNN & Time," a joint project of CNN and Time Magazine, that accused the U.S. military of war crimes. Both news organizations, divisions of Time Warner Communications, have retracted the charges. Mr. Arnett said he had only a minor part as the broadcast's principal narrator. A lengthy version of his account of the raid was published in Time magazine under Mr. Arnett's byline. That, too, was retracted.

April Oliver and Jack Smith, the producers - the TV term for reporters - continue to stand by the story. Miss Oliver accused CNN of "caving in" to criticism and said Mr. Arnett did extensive reporting for the broadcast.

War veterans demanded Mr. Arnett be fired, noting that he also interviewed three ex-commandoes, two of whom supplied accounts later rebutted by other men on the mission to a remote village in Laos.

Mr. Johnson said he was unaware of the full nature of Mr. Arnett's role last week when he fired the program's two lead producers and spared Mr. Arnett. Mr. Johnson also accepted the resignation of the vice president in charge of "NewsStand." He called Mr. Arnett to CNN's Atlanta headquarters as pressure grew on CNN to further discipline the network's star.

Men on the Laos mission, code-named "Operation Tailwind," quickly challenged the story as not true. They said tear gas, not sarin, was dropped from Air Force planes to help commandoes escape Laos via helicopter. The Pentagon says its investigation has turned up no evidence sarin, one of the deadliest nerve gases, was used.

Mr. Johnson first directed Floyd Abrams, a prominent media and libel-defense lawyer, to undertake an investigation of the CNN-Time investigation, and issued a blistering report that recommended a retraction of the entire story.

Mr. Johnson himself broadcast the retraction and apology, and assigned reporter Bruce Morton to narrate a story on CNN's mistakes. Mr. Johnson, who was publisher of the Los Angeles Times before he joined CNN, telephoned several of the men on Operation Tailwind to apologize to them personally.

He held three "town meetings" for CNN employees, taking harsh criticism for allowing the story to be broadcast.

Mr. Arnett, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his Vietnam War reporting for the Associated Press, was asked yesterday why he, as a reporter with years of experience, had not asked questions about the story as the CNN reporting unfolded.

"I had no real reason to doubt it," he said. "I didn't do the research. I didn't know whether it was true or not. Laos was a black hole during the war. A lot went on there that we didn't know about."

GRAPHIC: Photo, Peter Arnett

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: July 9, 1998

59TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1998 The Durham Herald Co.
The Herald-Sun (Durham, N.C.)

July 08, 1998, Wednesday

SECTION: Editorial; Pg. A10;

LENGTH: 666 words

HEADLINE: NERVE-GAS REPORT
Victims, of a sort

BODY:

If you aren't a victim of something or somebody these days, you're out of the loop. Thus it comes as no surprise that April Oliver and Jack Smith, the cashiered producers of CNN's nerve-gas story that blew up last week like a conventional explosive, are casting themselves as victims.

Oliver and Smith would be better off in the long run by admitting that their June 7 "Newsstand" investigation of Operation Tailwind came a cropper. But, no, these two were still hanging tough Monday, charging on CNN's "Crossfire" talk show that the cable network's executives backed away from the story "because they couldn't take the heat."

The fact that Oliver and Smith have not produced, and no doubt cannot produce, any evidence that U.S. troops used nerve gas during the 1970 Tailwind incursion into Laos seems to mean nothing to them. However, the issue for CNN and Time magazine (both owned by Time Warner) is not one of taking the heat for a story that nosedived but whether the story was wrong. Both news organizations retracted their respective takes on the nerve-gas story last week.

Incidentally, Smith, not one to go quietly, alleged Monday that CNN "gagged" him and Oliver after the June 7 broadcast came under scrutiny. One wishes.

LOAD-DATE: July 08, 1998

65TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1998 Newsday, Inc.
Newsday (New York, NY)

July 8, 1998, Wednesday, NASSAU AND SUFFOLK EDITION

SECTION: VIEWPOINTS; Page A39

LENGTH: 869 words

HEADLINE: EYE ON THE MEDIA / VIETNAM WAR NEWS STILL TOUCHES A NERVE

BYLINE: By Danny Schechter. Danny Schechter, a former CNN and ABC producer, is executive producer of Globalvision and author of "The More You Watch The Less You Know."

BODY:

THERE SEEMS to be a scandal a week in the press - about the press. Now it is CNN's turn. The network has retracted and apologized for a June 7 broadcast called "Operation Tailwind," a heavily-hyped story charging that a secret U.S. military unit deployed sarin, a deadly nerve gas, against Vietnamese troops and suspected U.S. defectors in the illegal war in Laos 28 years ago.

The debate over this story about nerve gas has continued to rage because it has touched a deeper nerve, raising questions not only about the state of TV journalism but about the hidden history of American military conduct overseas. CNN has not disavowed the story totally, only saying it now believes the evidence shown was insufficient. All of CNN's charges may not have been proven, but how about some independent analysis from war scholars, including critics, not just the findings of high-priced lawyers on a mea-culpa face-saving mission? One of the fired producers, April Oliver, who I know personally, still stands by her story. She says there's been a "deliberate attempt to mischaracterize me. It's part of killing the messenger." She was probing the secrets of covert operations teams skilled in the art of plausible deniability. Or as she put it, "These shadow warriors don't like us looking into their dark spaces."

Credit CNN with the guts to go after them, but why cram this blockbuster into 18 minutes, not the hour the producers had sought and were denied? CNN has plenty of airtime - 24 hours a day, in fact. If the story was bogus, why did it run? According to Oliver and her supervising producer Jack Smith, who was also axed, lawyers and top executives at the network all approved the story, and key sources confirmed it. They say CNN was pressured by media hysteria and political intervention, including calls from former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, one of the architects of the Vietnam War, including the expansion into Laos. They say a crime that has been covered up is being covered up again.

So was nerve gas used? I'm still not clear, but I can't rule it out, perhaps because I remember past cover-ups of bombings, burnings, napalm, Agent Orange, the CIA's use of poisons in assassination attempts, the murders of civilians, the My-Lais, war crimes and blatant lies that have made for a continuing credibility gap.

When the Pentagon starts denying Vietnam horrors, I reach for my truth

detector. The only way we will get real facts about suppressed information is when we establish a South Africa-style Truth Commission with subpoena power. Then we can discover what the military brass knew and when they forgot they knew it. Remember the Pentagon Papers, 28 volumes of the secret history of the war's origins filled with documents that the American people hadn't seen until Daniel Ellsberg, a former defense analyst, released them to the press? They revealed what was being concealed - the kind of information that the CNN producers were after. Ironically, Floyd Abrams, the lawyer who fought for public disclosure on the case, is now convinced that CNN's report is "flawed." But he does say the report was not "fabricated." He also says that continued investigation is justified. Will there be more in this climate? I doubt it. It would be interesting to learn more about the defectors we've never heard of before as well as the Vietnamese side of the story.

And look who's bashing CNN. None other than that paragon of truthful journalism, Rupert Murdoch, a long-time enemy of CNN founder Ted Turner. Within minutes of the retraction, Roger Ailes, a one-time media advisor to Presidents Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan and now chief of Murdoch's conservative Fox News Channel, circulated an internal memo praising his staff's "meticulous reporting efforts" investigating CNN's investigation. "We were the first major news organization," he boasted, "to raise questions about the accuracy of that story." Murdoch's Post went further, giving CNN, the network Murdoch has denounced as "too liberal," a full-scale tabloid trouncing. His New York Post frontpage screamed: "WHAT NERVE!" Make no mistake: CNN is being targeted for prying into Pentagon secrets. It's fair to ask whether this attack is orchestrated. It sure feels like a rerun of "The Empire Strikes Back."

Behind this scandal are rarely covered institutional forces. There are few TV shows about what's really driving the fever to get sensational news on the air before it is checked carefully. Corporate media strategies are sabotaging serious journalism by diverting resources away from reporting to enrich shareholders. Pressures for the Big Scoop are evident in CNN's exploitation of this story to launch its "NewsStand" newsmagazine series in a collaboration with Time. It was about satisfying demands for profitable cross-promotional "synergy" within the TimeWarner media empire. To prime the profit pump, news is turning into a stew of half-truths, speculation and tantalizing tidbits gussied up with slick packaging.

CNN has been a leader in covering Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Let's hope that my colleagues will focus more attention on "weapons of mass distraction" - TV news itself.

GRAPHIC: Photo - Danny Schechter

LANGUAGE: English

LOAD-DATE: July 8, 1998

75TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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CNBC News Transcripts

SHOW: HARDBALL WITH CHRIS MATTHEWS (8:00 PM ET)

July 7, 1998, Tuesday 9:02 AM

LENGTH: 2017 words

HEADLINE: CNN PRODUCERS APRIL OLIVER, JACK SMITH, AND FORMER FOREIGN
CORRESPONDENT ARNAUD DE BORCHGRAVE DISCUSS A STORY THAT CLAIMED THE US USED
NERVE GAS IN LAOS DURING VIETNAM WAR

ANCHORS: CHRIS MATTHEWS

BODY:

CHRIS MATTHEWS, host:

On June 7th, CNN aired a report on its "NewsStand" broadcast that claimed the United States used nerve gas in Laos during the Vietnam War. Following a reaction of outrage from the Pentagon, CNN hired media attorney Floyd Abrams to conduct an internal investigation. The result: CNN retracted the story last week, a supervising producer resigned and the two main story producers were fired. Peter Arnett, the reporter, was reprimanded. The fired producers stand by their story and have been telling it, even on CNN.

Joining us now--they are right here on the stage with us--April Oliver and my longtime friend, Jack Smith. I should say that you are a longtime Washington bureau chief for CBS and a Chicago bureau chief and you've had an incredible record in journalism, so let's start from that. Let me ask you the tough questions which our viewers would like to know the answer to. Do either of you know for a fact that the US used nerve gas to kill Americans?

Ms. APRIL OLIVER (Former CNN Producer): We--we know what our sources told us, and our sources told us that this, indeed, happened and that it had happened more than one time. Admiral Moorer, about a month before the broadcast, sat down with me a--for about a two-hour conversation. He was then chair--he was chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1970. In this conversation in May, which was our third conversation, he told me that the sarin nerve gas weapon, a weapon called GB' by the military, was, by and large, available for search and rescue attempts in Laos and North Vietnam, that there was good tactical ra--rationale for this because it was a weapon that could save American lives.

MATTHEWS: This is nerve gas. And you said that the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Thomas Moorer, said that the--that the United States military used it against American defectors. He said that to you.

Ms. OLIVER: I--no, th--he--what I--let me be very precise about this. In our third conversation, in May, wi--that a--conversation was about defectors and it was about wider use of nerve gas. On the defector front, he confirmed to me that the Operation Tailwind, which our report dealt with, was specifically a mission designed to target defectors. On a separate issue, he talked to me

about the wider use of nerve gas in Laos and in North Vietnam. And on that particular issue, he said that--that this s--specific weapon, CBU-15, GB, sarin nerve gas, was, by and large, available for search and rescue missions in Laos and North Vietnam. And the--the rationale for this is that, you know, the sun is going down, the enemy is all around, the pilot that's downed in this airplane is about to die; there--the enemy is about to take a POW or seize the radio. The only advantage that--that could possibly get him out is to drop this gas, put a PJ, a parajumper, down a cable in a gas mask and start going through the--the knocked-out bodies to see if you can get to the pilot in time. Now this was a scenario described to us not just by Admiral Moorer but by--What?--What?--about a half-dozen--but I--but I--b...

MATTHEWS: But that's not aimed at killing Americans, that's aimed at saving Americans.

Ms. OLIVER: No, no, it--that is correct, and in my...

MATTHEWS: But you say that you don--that d--that Admiral Moorer is your source--the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs, in his 80s, is your source for a story that US military officials at a command level decided to use this technology, this nerve gas...

Ms. OLIVER: Mm-hmm.

MATTHEWS: ...to kill Americans.

Ms. OLIVER: Well, actually, have you read the transcript carefully? What--what we say in this particular report is that--that that particular weapon was used to get 16 Americans and a hundred and f--approximately 140 Montagnards out alive from an extremist situation in which they were about to die. We also have reports that this particular weapon was used offensively on a--a--a target, a village base camp, in which there were enemy present and there appeared to be American defectors as well in this camp.

MATTHEWS: Appeared to be American defectors. What do you mean by appeared to be American defectors'?

Ms. OLIVER: We had report--no, we--we had reports and we had confirmation from several of the reconnaissance teams who were s--positioned around the camp that there were round-eyes, Americans, Caucasians in this camp.

MATTHEWS: How do you know they weren't Russian military advisers...

Ms. OLIVER: Well, that...

MATTHEWS: ...or Eastern--Eastern Bloc Communist advisers to a Communist military unit? Why did you presume that they were Americans.

Ms. OLIVER: I didn't presume. It's a fair question, and we certainly...

MATTHEWS: No, but you're saying that this happened. You said the United States used nerve gas to kill Americans, and now you're saying they appeared to be Americans.

Ms. OLIVER: No, I didn't. You're--you're--no, no, I d--I didn't say that--we never said that Americans died from the nerve gas in that particular camp. You're--everybody's misreading the report. What we said is that it was used in an offensive way, prior to them going in, that it was a--it was a very easy wa--I wouldn't say easy walk, but at least a--a l--not as embattled an entry into that village base camp. But we never report that, in fact, in that village base camp Americans were killed.

MATTHEWS: Let me read from your statement. Let me read from your statement...

Ms. OLIVER: Mm-hmm.

MATTHEWS: ...April: The use of sarin gas--nerve gas, and a policy to kill defectors by the US military should be remembered and written into the history books.'

Ms. OLIVER: But those are two separate issues. Those are--they're not necessarily linked.

MATTHEWS: So you're not saying that we used nerve gas to kill Americans.

Ms. OLIVER: I--what I'm saying is we used nerve gas to get those Americans out alive from that--tha...

MATTHEWS: Sure. But that's not wha...

Ms. OLIVER: ...and--and...

MATTHEWS: ...that isn't the bombastic--the blockbuster story here. The blockbuster story is that American military guys sat around and said, Let's kill Americans and let's use nerve gas to do it.' That's a hell of an accusation, and you're saying you're not making it.

Ms. OLIVER: And--and I'm saying that a--a lot of people haven't paid attention to nuance and context in this report. You yourself...

MATTHEWS: So you're not saying that.

Ms. OLIVER: You--you yourself have admitted that you never even saw the report.

MATTHEWS: Well, because--because very few people did. Let me read what--what your--the--the CAA--the CNN official said: There was no proof and no credical e--cred--credible evidence either that nerve gas was used in the mission or that American defectors were the targets.' So they're retracting what you say they never s--you never said in the report.

Ms. OLIVER: Well, let--let's be clear here. We did report two separate things. We did report that nerve gas was used on this mission, and we have sources that tell us that even today. And I do believe that if you look very carefully at the script, you will see that the two are not necessarily linked.

MATTHEWS: So we--so you're not saying--in other words, your report...

Ms. OLIVER: I--I am--I--what...

MATTHEWS: Let's just get this out so the people watching who didn't watch--the 1 percent of the country that watched this report...

Ms. OLIVER: We're saying...

MATTHEWS: ...that--that your report never said that the US used nerve gas to kill Americans.

Ms. OLIVER: That--what was said--it was used pr--pre-emptively, offensively on a village in which Americans went in as--and were targeting these defectors, but we have no way to know for sure whether it meant...

MATTHEWS: But the headline coming out of your report was the United States used nerve gas against its own Americans, and that was what was so heart-stopping about this piece.

Ms. OLIVER: And a--and I'm telling you that a lot of people got it wrong.

MATTHEWS: Was that wrong, Jack, to get that headline wrong?

Mr. JACK SMITH (Former CNN Senior Producer): It was wrong to get that headline wrong, and Newsweek got it wrong right off the bat when they said nerve gas was dropped to kill the...

MATTHEWS: Well, I think your--your s--your superiors at CNN got it wrong.

Mr. SMITH: It was wrong.

MATTHEWS: We'll be back with HARDBALL on CNBC.

(Announcements)

MATTHEWS: Well, let me just read to you what--this was what Jeff Greenfield said on CNN the other night in retracting this whole story about the use of nerve gas against US defectors, and that's the way he put it: First, the--the--the story asserted that deadly nerve gas was used and, second, that the American military defectors were the targets of that operation. There was no proof and no credible evidence either that nerve gas was used in the mission or that American defectors were the targets.'

Jack, it sounds like they're denying something you aren't asserting.

Mr. SMITH: We reported in that report that gas was dropped on the camp the night before the commandos went in and killed everything in that camp. Nobody has the first inkling of how many or if anybody was killed by that gas drop the night before the commando attack. The commando attack left everybody dead. They ran through it with machine guns, automatic weapons, they tossed grenades in the hooches. Everybody was dead at the end of that commando assault. Nobody knows--because--because the gas was dropped the night before on that camp, nobody knows if it hit on target. It could've hit 100 feet off. There was a huge tunnel compound...

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

Mr. SMITH: ...below that camp. There's...

MATTHEWS: But the question the American people watching want to know...

Mr. SMITH: Chris--Chris, no, the people need to know there's a huge tunnel compound below that village.

MATTHEWS: Right.

Mr. SMITH: People could've escaped down into that tunnel, as you got those A-1s coming in. A-1s move very slow and they make a lot of noise. It was 8:00 at night when they came in. People are still up. They heard those planes coming. Whether they were gonna drop a bomb or strafe...

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

Mr. SMITH: ...or drop nerve gas, you could get into the tunnel compound.

MATTHEWS: But the onl--but the question is, did the United States military ever assign anyone the mission to use nerve gas to kill Americans?

Mr. SMITH: Well...

MATTHEWS: That's still the question.

Mr. SMITH: Well, let me tell ya this. Since this broadcast has been on the air, CNN interviewed a former commando who operated in Cambodia...

MATTHEWS: Right.

Mr. SMITH: ...who has told us that he went in with a team of Cambodians and hauled nerve gas into a camp, killed two American defectors there. Then he moved through the night to a second camp, hauled in nerve gas to kill two defectors in another camp.

MATTHEWS: And who's this source?

Mr. SMITH: This is a man that we interviewed in the shadows, pixilated, and had to disguise his voice because he was afraid to be identified because of the fear and intimidation?

MATTHEWS: Can you bring him out now? Can you bring him out now?

Mr. SMITH: That videotape is--is in Atlanta. It's in the--it's in Atlanta and it's in the--the "NewsStand" unit down there.

Ms. OLIVER: Frankly, I don't...

Mr. SMITH: We were still trying to pursue that story until Rick Kaplan an--ad Tom Johnson, the two CNN bosses, chopped the head off it by s--by trying to get it behind them and getting these lawyers in to issue this--this star-chamber report.

MATTHEWS: Arnaud de Borchgrave, you get in here--former car--war correspondent and senior adviser to the Center for Strategic International Studies.

Arnaud, what do you make of this?

Mr. ARNAUD de BORCHGRAVE (Former Foreign Correspondent): Well, it's--I don't wish to play the role of the fellow who rides down from the hills after the battle is over and shoots the wounded, and these two wounded producers are--are still fighting. What I will say is that I watched the show very carefully. The sinister overtones and the sinister undertones were that the US had committed--US military had committed a horrendous war crime by using poison nerve gas to kill US defectors or deserters. Now that simply doesn't stand the BS test. It seems to me that you have a series of adamant denials that have been turned into ambiguous confirmations. It is selective editing. It is censorship by omission. You had eight months to work on the story. There were 200 people interviewed, but only two gave ambiguous confirmations and one, as you--we all know, was a former lieutenant, Robert Buskirk, who suddenly, thanks to April Oliver, managed to recover his memory after a 25-year absence.

MATTHEWS: OK, we don't have enough time to do this justice. We'll have to come back to this. "Rivera Live's" up next with the latest on the verdict in the Ennis Cosby trial. Join me next time for more HARDBALL. See you then.

LANGUAGE: English

LOAD-DATE: July 9, 1998

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The Hotline

July 7, 1998

SECTION: HOTLINE PEOPLE

LENGTH: 348 words

HEADLINE: CNN: IN THE "CROSSFIRE" -- OUR OWN EX-PRODUCERS!

BODY:

CNN's "Crossfire" hosted the two producers fired in the wake of CNN NewsStand's "Tailwind" story -- ex-senior producer Jack Smith and ex-producer April Oliver. Smith: "April Oliver and I were gagged by CNN. For three weeks, no response to this torrent of criticism that poured down on us. This story was allowed to hang out there from a tree and bleed to death, and then it was lynched. That's what CNN did to this story because they couldn't take the heat. They wanted to put it behind us, behind CNN. (CNN pres.) Rick Kaplan, (CNN CEO) Tom Johnson caved to pressure on this story. They caved to pressure because they didn't want further reporting done on it. Mr. Kaplan has to be asked this question: Why were we not allowed to produce the hour broadcast on the opposing voice of Tailwind that was initially proposed to follow up on our two reports on this? That story was on the launch pad, and all of a sudden it just disappeared because Kaplan and Johnson wanted to get this behind them." Oliver, asked why some opposing views weren't included: "It would have been wonderful to put a lot of things on the air. I asked for an hour from this network to do the story appropriately to have lots of different points of view, to have a lot of different context and nuance. The management of CNN turned us down on an hour." ("Crossfire," 7/6). Oliver and Smith also appeared on "Charlie Rose."

THIS ... IS CNN'S REACTION -- FROM ITS OWN REPORTERS!

CNN's Novak: "When I watched this show originally I said, gee, that couldn't have happened, and if it did happen they sure haven't proved it. I still believe, after listening to their impassioned and I think sincere defense, they didn't prove it happened, and you have to prove it." CNN's Press: "I think it proves that even the best can screw up" ("Crossfire," 7/6). CNN's Blitzer: "I think it's a real sad development and probably the worst blunder in CNN's 18-year history" ("Larry King Live," 7/6). Want To Know More?

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: July 7, 1998

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NPR

SHOW: NPR ALL THINGS CONSIDERED (NPR 8:00 pm ET)

JULY 7, 1998, TUESDAY

Transcript # 98070704-212

TYPE: INTERVIEW

SECTION: News; Domestic

LENGTH: 1565 words

HEADLINE: Investigating the Media: CNN in Turmoil

GUESTS: Howard Kurtz

BYLINE: Linda Wertheimer, Washington, DC; Robert Siegel

HIGHLIGHT:

Robert talks with Howard Kurtz, the media critic for the Washington Post and the author of "Spin Cycle: Inside the Clinton Propaganda Machine." They discuss reaction both inside and outside CNN following the network's retraction of a story that alleged sarin nerve gas was used by U.S. troops against deserters in Laos in 1970. The producers of the story were fired, and the reporter reprimanded. The whole affair has turned attention to the internal checks on stories carried out at news organizations nationwide.

BODY:

LINDA WERTHEIMER, HOST: This is ALL THINGS CONSIDERED. I'm Linda Wertheimer.

ROBERT SIEGEL, HOST: And I'm Robert Siegel.

Now, more on the Operation Tailwind story that appeared on the premiere of the cable TV show "Newsstand: CNN and Time." That story was retracted, but the story of how it got on the air and who should be held responsible for it lingers on with a vengeance.

CNN reported that U.S. forces used nerve gas, the nerve gas Sarin, during a mission in Laos in 1970. After protests from veterans of the mission, the cable network called in constitutional lawyer Floyd Abrams (ph) to review the report and the outtakes.

He found many editorial lapses, statements contrary to the story's conclusion, were excluded from the 18 minute piece. Key answers, it turned out, were in

fact replies to hypothetical rather than specific questions.

So the two producers, Jack Smith and April Oliver, were fired. Their supervisor, Pamela Hill, resigned and the correspondent, Peter Arnett, was reprimanded. Smith and Oliver stand by their story and they defended it yesterday on the CNN program "Crossfire."

(BEGIN AUDIO CLIP, "CROSSFIRE")

APRIL OLIVER, FORMER CNN NEWS PRODUCER: What is the standard of proof in a black operation where everyone is supposed to deny or information is tightly compartmentalized? We went the extra step and showed the script itself, the finished product, to three sources, one of them was Admiral Moore (ph), two other ones were very highly placed, confidential sources with access to information to confirm this.

They both gave the script a thumbs up in terms of 100 percent accuracy. We, you know...

BILL PRESS, MODERATOR, CNN'S CROSSFIRE: What gives me problems are the omissions, the stuff that was left out. I want to give you another example because...

OLIVER: Omissions? I asked for an hour and they took out my -- my skeptics Art Bishop (ph).

PRESS: I just don't buy the excuse of the time being an excuse...

SIEGEL: It turns out that however heated the debate may be on CNN, it's hotter at CNN. In staff meetings yesterday, journalists questioned the assignment of responsibility for the Tailwind story.

Howard Kurtz, who covers the media for the Washington Post, reported on those discussions inside CNN.

HOWARD KURTZ, MEDIA CRITIC, THE WASHINGTON POST, AUTHOR, "SPIN CYCLE: INSIDE THE CLINTON PROPAGANDA MACHINE": Well not to put too fine a point on it, CNN is in turmoil right now over the aftermath of this tremendous blunder that somehow got on the air despite being screened at the highest levels.

There's a lot of anger, I think, that the lower level troops, the people who actually put this story together, were cast aside while the top executives, while saying that they accept full responsibility, nothing has happened to them.

And there's some anger as well at Peter Arnett, Pulitzer Prize winning correspondent, who by his account basically came in, joined a couple of interviews and read the script. Although anybody watching TV would think Arnett -- it was his story.

SIEGEL: Yes. Arnett, according to April Oliver, one of the dismissed producers who appeared actually to argue about this on a CNN program yesterday, on their Crossfire program, she said he had done -- while she was the primary reporter, he had done three key interviews.

In addition to that, he detached his by-line to the print version of this that was published in Time magazine. So clearly, so long as the story was good, Arnett wanted to be heavily associated with it.

KURTZ: Well Peter Arnett's defense, in this very raucous meeting yesterday, is that he didn't know his by-line was going to be on the Time magazine piece that was, he says, written by April Oliver, that he wrote not one comma of the script, and when he did join a couple of these interviews, he was basically given a list of questions to ask by April Oliver.

He's got a difficult spot here. On the one hand, if he says he was substantially involved in the reporting then the question becomes, how come he didn't lose his job? On the other hand, if he says that he had almost nothing to do with it other than to be the face and the voice of the piece, it kind of raises the question about whether he's lending his credibility to allegations, pretty serious allegations, about which he has no idea whether they are solid.

SIEGEL: I think it goes beyond raising the question, if that's the case.

KURTZ: Sure.

SIEGEL: Now looking back off air at responsibility for this, one step above Pamela Hill, whose resignation was sought and given, would be Mr. Kaplan who is the president of CNN-USA. What's his role in all of this and what accountability was -- or has been or has not been assigned to him?

KURTZ: Well Rick Kaplan has said that he considered resigning but chose not to. He looked at the piece before it aired, by his own account didn't ask the right questions. He says he didn't have enough information to ask questions about some of the obvious inconsistencies and flaws and problems and weaknesses with this piece.

But Rick Kaplan is also a guy who has been the president of the network for less than a year, brought over from ABC, so he's viewed by many as an outsider. It was his baby, these magazine shows, for which this was the debut on one of the programs.

And so, a lot of people are scratching their heads and saying if this guy pushed for these shows, screened this piece in advance, how come nothing essentially has happened to him while other people have lost their jobs?

SIEGEL: And in your account of the staff meetings yesterday, people were raising questions about Kaplan's work back at ABC.

KURTZ: That was the most surprising thing of this whole crazy and very intense day, was that people, talking openly about their boss at the network, were throwing back in his face some of the controversies that he had been involved with in the past, such as the Food Lion lawsuit against ABC and others.

That gives you an indication, I think, of how upset many CNN people are over what they see as the tarnishing of the network's credibility and how upset they are over the role of both Rick Kaplan and Peter Arnett.

SIEGEL: CNN's treatment of all this is quite -- it's very unusual. On the one

hand, there's this turmoil in house, on the other hand they've devoted one of their -- one edition of their media program to discussing this story, they devoted yesterday's Crossfire to discussing this story.

So, they are opening up themselves to at least discussion and criticism of their own handling of it.

KURTZ: I can't think of another example of where a news organization has not only apologized for a blunder of this magnitude, but where critics and in this case the people who were fired were put on the air and allowed to have their say.

You certainly can't accuse CNN of sweeping this under the rug. They made Kaplan available for Reliable Sources, a program that I appear on. But none of this completely mitigates the damage. It does enable CNN to say that we have taken steps to deal with the mistakes that we have made here, but it doesn't mitigate the fact that some pretty serious errors in judgment were in fact made.

SIEGEL: Is it -- was there by the way somebody on this program who was either nominally or by function "the editor," and who actually said after looking over the program, "this passes my scrutiny, it's OK" or "I asked them to go back and they did" or "check that and they didn't"?

KURTZ: Well, the person who probably most closely approximates that role would be Pamela Hill, the woman who resigned who was the -- in charge of the CNN magazine programs. But it went to two levels above her at the Atlanta headquarters, Rick Kaplan and Tom Johnson, the chairman of CNN who himself has twice offered to resign, but that resignation has been turned down by Ted Turner, the founder of the network.

Those guys, you know, television professionals, looked at this, raised some questions, but obviously didn't raise enough questions. And it sort of raises the issue of: what was the great rush to get this on the air? We're talking about an alleged incident in Laos that happened 28 years ago.

They weren't going to get beat on this story. And the only impetus that I can see for not holding it up, even after CNN's own Pentagon reporter raised questions about the validity of the story, was that they had the debut of this program Newsstand: CNN and Time and this obviously would make for a very splashy debut, probably made a bigger splash than they had imagined.

SIEGEL: Howard Kurtz, thank you very much for talking with us.

KURTZ: Thank you.

SIEGEL: Howard Kurtz covers the media for the Washington Post.

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CNN

SHOW: CNN CROSSFIRE 19:30 pm ET

July 6, 1998; Monday 7:30 pm Eastern Time

Transcript # 98070600V20

TYPE: SHOW

SECTION: News; Domestic

LENGTH: 3909 words

HEADLINE: Operation Tailwind: Two Fired CNN Producers Still Believe in Their
Story

GUESTS: April Oliver, Jack Smith

BYLINE: Bill Press, Robert Novak

HIGHLIGHT:

CNN has retracted and apologized for its Tailwind report. But why did two fired
CNN producers, April Oliver and Jack Smith, still believe in their story?

BODY:

THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT. THIS COPY MAY NOT BE IN ITS FINAL FORM AND MAY BE
UPDATED.

BILL PRESS, CO-HOST: Tonight, CNN has retracted and apologized for its
Tailwind report. But why did two fired CNN producers, April Oliver and Jack
Smith, still believe in their story?

ANNOUNCER: Live from Washington, CROSSFIRE. On the left, Bill Press. On the
right Robert Novak. In the crossfire, former CNN NEWSSTAND producer April
Oliver and former CNN NEWSSTAND senior producer Jack Smith.

PRESS: Good evening, welcome to CROSSFIRE. CNN's apologized. CNN's retracted
the story. So why do two producers still insist their story is accurate? That
story, of course, Operation Tailwind, that American forces used nerve gas during
the Vietnam War and targeted American defectors. What happened? How did such
an inaccurate story ever get on the air?

Two theories: An official inquiry by attorney Floyd Abrams concluded that the
story, while carefully researched, was never conclusively proven. The evidence

just wasn't there. CNN president Rick Kaplan says the producers fell so much in love with their work, they failed to notice weaknesses in their own story.

But the two producers of Operation Tailwind, April Oliver and Jack Smith, fired by CNN, not only refuse to back down, they accuse CNN of caving into pressure from big shots like Henry Kissinger and Colin Powell. In the interest of hearing both sides, we have invited April Oliver and Jack Smith into the crossfire tonight for some tough questioning from both me and Bob Novak -- Bob.

ROBERT NOVAK, CO-HOST: Let me start off by stipulating that Jack Smith for several years was the producer of the "EVANS & NOVAK" program and I also worked with April Oliver on that program.

Jack Smith, quite a par from any kind of interference by Kissinger and Colin Powell, there is nobody in the journalistic community who has come to your aid on this story. There is nobody in CNN besides the two of you, I know, who have supported you. The -- in fact, CNN has been commended for cutting their losses. Isn't it time for you to say, hey, we were wrong?

JACK SMITH, FORMER SENIOR PRODUCER, CNN "NEWSSTAND": Bob, you have been a reporter a long time, and I have been a reporter a long time. When you work on a story and you gather the facts and you're sure of your facts and you bring them into the newspaper, or you put

them on the air, and all of a sudden a furor is created. A furor that comes from the Pentagon; a furor that continues from Kissinger; a furor that comes from competing news organizations, "Newsweek"; Rupert Murdoch's news organization, Fox.

And your news organization gags you from responding to those criticisms that are pouring in -- April Oliver and I were gagged by CNN for three weeks, no response to this torrent of criticism that poured down on us. The story was allowed to hang out there from a tree and bleed to death and then it was lynched. That's what is CNN did to the story because they couldn't take the heat. They wanted to put it behind us, behind CNN.

Rick Kaplan, Tom Johnson caved to pressure on this story. They caved to pressure because they didn't want further reporting done on it. Mr. Kaplan has to be asked this question: why were we not allowed to produce the hour broadcast on the opposing voice of Tailwind that was initially proposed to follow up on our two reports on this? That story was on the launch pad and all of a sudden, it just disappeared because Kaplan and Johnson wanted to get this behind them.

NOVAK: But there's another thing that happened, Jack, that shortly after the story ran that people have forgotten about to a great extent, and that is what I would consider your primary source, Former Army Lieutenant Robert Van Buskirk said that he was not the source for the story. He said "I am not their source for sarin. I am not their source for a bomb strike on the camp, which I didn't know was there until I stumbled onto it. I am not their source for scores of civilians who were allegedly killed." That docks out your story, doesn't it?

APRIL OLIVER, FORMER PRODUCER, CNN "NEWSSTAND": No. He's absolutely right.

PRESS: One at a time.

NOVAK: Who?

SMITH: Let April go. I had a first shot.

OLIVER: He's absolutely right. This story was multiply sourced. We had, you know, eight people at least on our source book on the lethal gas end of this.

NOVAK: Name one.

OLIVER: We had Admiral Moore read and confirm the script on -- six days before we went to air, I went out to see Admiral Moore with the script in hand. Admiral Moore and I had met for eight hours over the past six months.

NOVAK: That's your source for the story, a 87-year-old man in a nursing home?

OLIVER: If I could correct you, sir, he's not in a nursing home. He's in assisted care home. He's a very distinguished gentleman and even the Floyd Abrams report says he's of sound mind. That is man who

had great courage to step forward. He told me he was doing it for the purposes of history. He thought that it was important that this issue get debated and vetted in the public. He read the script line by line six days before air and gave it the sign off -- the signal of approval.

The day after the story broke when the controversy exploded in his face and the pressure of the pentagon came down upon him, I went out to see Admiral Moorer again within the presence of Jack Smith." He looked at me and he said, "first of all, young lady, people today don't understand the context of the times back then. They just -- they don't get it."

PRESS: OK. Let me go right to Admiral Moorer, because he seems to be the cornerstone of your story.

OLIVER: He's not. We have multiple sources.

PRESS: One.

OLIVER: You have to understand that we have multiple sources on this.

PRESS: I don't mean to exaggerate his importance, but very central to your story. He is very important to the story, former head of the joint chiefs of staff. I would like to show a clip, first of all, from your broadcast of Operation Tailwind, about what Admiral Moorer said on that broadcast.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP, CNN's "NEWSSTAND," "Valley of Death")

OLIVER: So CBU-15 was a top secret weapon?

ADMIRAL THOMAS MOORER, FORMER CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS: When it was, it should have been, let's put it that way.

OLIVER: What's your understanding of how often it was applied during this war?

MOORER: Well, I don't have any figures that tell you how many times. I have

never made a point of counting that up. I am sure that you can find out that from those that used them.

OLIVER: So isn't it fair to say that Tailwind proved that CBU-15 GB (ph) is an effective weapon?

MOORER: Yes. I think -- but I think that was already known. Otherwise, they never would have been -- as a matter of fact...

(END VIDEO CLIP)

PRESS: Now, listening to that, you get the impression that nerve gas was used. He's just not sure how many times. It was certainly effective. Here are some outtakes from the interview that did not make the air, your interview from (INAUDIBLE).

OLIVER: That's earlier in the interview.

PRESS: Let's see this...

OLIVER: Earlier in the interview, OK?

PRESS: All right. Let's listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

OLIVER: It was the first time that the U.S. ever used what's known as a lethal nerve gas in combat. Are you -- how much awareness do you have of this?

MOORER: None. And what you should do when you make a statement like that is get -- you said you'd been told by people, so get all of those people in front of this camera...

OLIVER: We have.

MOORER: ... and let them tell you that that was the case.

OLIVER: We have gotten them in front of the camera.

MOORER: But I don't have the information to confirm what they said.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

PRESS: Now, when I look at that, he says he has no knowledge of the use of this gas. And he cannot confirm what you're saying. Wasn't it dishonest to leave that out of your broadcast?

OLIVER: Absolutely not. And I'll tell you why. Over the course of eight months, we met with Admiral Moorer very many times. That particular interview you just showed was done in January. I met with Admiral Moorer again in May and his may interview which is virtually excluded from the Floyd Abrams report which ostensibly came to this conclusion that there was insufficient evidence, that

May interview was the clincher for us.

In this interview he concretely and exactly confirms that defectors were the target of Tailwind. Not says, not only does he say that, he says that Tailwind was not the only mission of its kind to target defectors. Then goes into very concrete terms about the wider use of sarin nerve gas being available for search-and-rescue missions.

PRESS: But April

OLIVER: Finally...

PRESS: April, he also says -- please.

OLIVER: Finally, he goes on a couple of weeks later to read every line of the script and reconfirm what he's already told us.

PRESS: Now...

OLIVER: Any good reporter knows that -- any good reporter goes...

(CROSSTALK)

PRESS: He also.

OLIVER: Any good reporter knows that you don't get the story the first time out. You get it at the end.

PRESS: He also said that he was never in charge of the operation. It was the CIA operation; it was not run through the pentagon, number one. He says over and over again, I read the transcript. He says "I am not confirming for you." He said "that's what you say, not what I say."

OLIVER: That's what he said in January. That is what he said in January.

PRESS: I am not confirming for you it was used. Over and over again he says I am not confirming and yet you use him as confirmation.

OLIVER: Because by...

PRESS: It doesn't add up.

OLIVER: By June he had confirmed. He had read the script.

NOVAK: Why didn't you put that on the air?

OLIVER: It would have been wonderful to put a lot of things on the air. I asked for an hour from this network to do the story appropriately to have lots of different points of view, to have a lot of different context and nuance, the management of CNN turned us down on an hour.

PRESS: Even if you -- I have to on that point even if you have what you get, 18 minutes, you still have to tell the truth. And you have to tell both sides of the story. You can't use this not getting a hour as an excuse. Eighteen

minutes is an eternity.

OLIVER: This is the truth. Admiral Moorer read -- our last contact with Admiral Moorer before the story aired was him sitting down reading the script line by line, smiling, reading we said -- we attributed to him as confirming, and then saying "well, I can tolerate a nuke. Give me gas, just don't stick me with a bayonet." The man -- we went to the extraordinary step of having him reconfirm the story.

NOVAK: Jack...

SMITH: Bob, I have -- I have to address that order for a minute.

NOVAK: Go ahead.

SMITH: Because when does a "yes" become a "no?" I will read from the transcript because there's a little bit cut out of it, April's question. So, Miss Oliver says to Admiral Moorer "so isn't it

fair to say in light of all this, everything we have talked about, that Tailwind proved that CBU-15 GB is an effective weapon? Yes. Yes. I think -- but I think that was already known. Otherwise it would never have been manufactured .

NOVAK: What's that got to do with that?

SMITH: Bob, a yes is a yes. Effective use, right?

NOVAK: It says that...

SMITH: That is a confirmation, Bob, under any construction...

NOVAK: It doesn't seem like it to me.

SMITH: It's a confirmation.

NOVAK: Let's move on, Jack. Captain Eugene McCarley, who was the Tailwind commander.

SMITH: Yes.

NOVAK: you had him on camera and off camera you say he said that it was impossible they used nerve gas on Tailwind.

SMITH: That's correct.

NOVAK: But on camera, here's what you ran.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP, CNN's "NEWSSTAND")

PETER ARNETT, CNN CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): Captain McCarley told CNN off camera the use of nerve gas on Tailwind was, quote, very possible." Later on camera he said

CNN CROSSFIRE, July 6, 1998

CAPTAIN EUGENE MCCARLEY: "I never, ever considered the use of lethal gas, not on any of my operations."

NOVAK: And then there was another thing, he said, which you didn't put in. And I can't believe that you didn't put this into the -- even if you had three minutes, that you didn't put this in as a balanced report. Let's take....

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

OLIVER: What is sleeping gas?

MCCARLEY: I don't know. I am not aware of any sleeping gas other than what the dentist gives to you.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

OLIVER: A lot of people don't know what sleeping gas -- I mean, the point here is that people knew this weapon by different names. Some knew it by the word "GB." Some knew it by the word "grubby." Some knew it by the word "CBU-15." Some knew it by the word "knockout gas," "drop dead gas," "sleeping gas."

People knew this weapon by different names. I would -- this just goes to underscore the point that a lot of people knew about this weapon. We had six different sources come forward and talk about this weapon in two different broadcasts; that is a multiply-sourced story.

NOVAK: That sounded like a "no" to me from (INAUDIBLE).

SMITH: He may not have known it as "sleeping gas." He may have known it as "knockout gas."

OLIVER: A third...

SMITH: Bob, you have to listen. We talked to pilots who called it "sleeping gas." We talked to pilots who called it "knockout gas." We talked to pilots who called it "GB." And we -- I got one more. Don't cut me off on that. Four is a home run. A pilot says it was "nerve gas."

PRESS: You have a pilot who said it was a tear gas, and you didn't put that on the air.

OLIVER: I... it was in our piece.

SMITH: It was on the air, Bill, it was on the air in the second report. It was on the final cut that she and I made and it was cut out by the execs in Atlanta, because Rick Kaplan had to have his little conceptual paragraph in the front end of the piece.

OLIVER: We had it in. It was in the piece that we sent to Atlanta. For us to take the bum rap on that is simply not fair. It's dishonest.

NOVAK: All right. We're going to take a break. And when we come back, we'll talk about somebody who didn't exactly get a bum rap. He got a sort of a slap on

the wrist, and that is the narrator of the program, Peter Arnett.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

NOVAK: Welcome back to CROSSFIRE.

Two producers were fired when CNN retracted its story of secret use of nerve gas by the U.S. military in the Vietnam War. But star CNN correspondent Peter Arnett, who narrated the documentary, got off with a reprimand. Is this fair? What was Peter Arnett's role? We're asking the two discharged CNN journalists, Jack Smith, former senior producer of "CNN NEWSSTAND," and April Oliver, former producer of "CNN NEWSSTAND" -- Bill.

PRESS: OK, let's get to Peter Arnett in just a second. But first, I want to come back to the central question that I think Bruce Morton asked on CNN last night, which is: the question is not whether nerve gas was used. The question is: did you prove -- can you prove that nerve gas was used?

And having read all your stuff as much as I can about this, even predisposed to believe it, I can't see where you prove it. None of your sources add up to that.

OLIVER: What is the standard of proof in a black operation where everyone's supposed to deny, or information is tightly compartmentalized? We went the extra step and showed the script itself, the finished product, to three sources. One of them was Admiral Moorer. Two other ones were very highly-placed, confidential sources with access to information to confirm this. They both gave the script a thumbs-up in terms of 100 percent accuracy. We -- you know...

PRESS: What gives me problems are the omissions, the stuff that was left out. I want to give you one example.

OLIVER: I want to say, I asked for an hour, and they took out my -- skeptics Art Bishop.

(CROSSTALK)

PRESS: It does...

I just don't buy the excuse of the time being an excuse for leaving things out. And this, what I'm going to show you now, would have taken little time to include. It's a clip from another source of yours, a Tailwind veteran, Michael Hagen, because CNN said in this piece, among other things, that women and children were killed.

OLIVER: Which we have four sources -- no, it's not based on Hagen. That is an inaccuracy.

PRESS: Partly based on this clip.

OLIVER: I'm sorry, sir, it's inaccurate.

PRESS: Let's listen to the video.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MICHAEL HAGEN, TAILWIND VETERAN: The majority of the people that were there were not combat personnel.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

PRESS: Now, that certainly gives the impression there were women and children killed. Here's what the entire clip says.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HAGEN: The majority of the people that were there were not combat personnel. They were more of a transportation unit.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

PRESS: Now, that's another second, but it totally changes the meaning of that sentence.

SMITH: No, no, no, it doesn't, Bill.

PRESS: It does.

SMITH: Time out. Anybody who is familiar with the war in Vietnam knows that support troops, support troops, quarter master, motor pool and drivers, always had their women and children with them. That's just a given. That's a given. Support troops of the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese had their women and children with them constantly.

OLIVER: They...

PRESS: Transportation troops does not prove to me -- is no evidence that...

SMITH: Well -- no, we have sources, four sources, that tell us that women and children were killed.

(CROSSTALK)

PRESS: Why'd you leave that out?

OLIVER: Even Captain McCarley says on camera; it would have been nice to put him in too. Even Captain McCarley says on camera about Tailwind: "If I have to take the hit for killing women and children, then I will just have to take that hit."

SMITH: Schmitt (ph) came back from the hospital; one of the men on the ground said a nurse and two kids are dead down by that field hospital. If those aren't women and children, then I don't know what women and children are.

NOVAK: Oh, Jack -- April, I want to ask you -- I want to clean this up. This show was presented originally as a Peter Arnett thing. Peter Arnett is big name in television. He was put in there. Now, did he parachute in and was given a

script, or did he take part in the presentation -- the preparation of the show?

OLIVER: I want to say that I have great respect for Peter Arnett. And he is a very fine journalist, and he certainly had a role in this. He did three of the major interviews for this. I did the prime reporting on this. There's no question, I spent -- I did the bulk of the eight months. And I am proud of this story. I consider it my finest journalistic achievement.

NOVAK: He has not supported you and Jack on this. He has not come out and said: yes this is a good story.

SMITH: I talked to Peter Arnett. I must speak now, because I telephoned Peter Arnett. And I said, "Peter, where are you on this?"

And he said, "Jack," he said, "I haven't even read the final Abrams Collier (ph) report." And I said, "Peter, I think what you need to do when you come back," -- he's out on the West Coast taking a little time off -- "sit down and read this star chamber report that

Abrams and Collier produced for the benefit of CNN management to cave on this story. Read it, then go back, Peter, and read all these transcripts and all these books that we have, and sit down and look at all the tape we have, and then come to your judgment on the story that, granted, you came in just like '60 Minutes' does, just like 'Nightline' does, just like Kaplan's former broadcast at ABC -- correspondents come in and read it."

Everybody who has any knowledge of this business knows that on news magazines, usually, the principal reporters are the producers like us.

NOVAK: All right, so he was not a principal producer, or reporter.

SMITH: He was not a principle reporter.

OLIVER: I think that is fair to say.

SMITH: And he shouldn't be any further punished than he is. We were the reporters.

NOVAK: OK, Jack. We only have a few -- less than a half a minute left. And I want to ask you, this: I read the transcript of the original program again, and I must say there is, except for Van Buskirk, who said he had a repressed memory of this -- and...

OLIVER: That is an incorrect...

NOVAK: Just a minute -- and then repudiated -- there is nobody on camera on that broadcast who confirms what you're saying.

SMITH: Right. And you know what? "The New York Times" and "The Washington Post" put stories on page one every day with faceless sources, confidential sources. Who is Deep Throat? That story ran for years. We still don't know who it is. Bob, you couldn't put a newspaper out. You couldn't put your column out without confidential sources.

PRESS: Let me ask you this.

SMITH: No. Repressed memory, we have to address it. Repressed memory is a bugaboo here.

PRESS: Very quick. Don't you think, taking all of this evidence, you certainly raise a lot of questions; you would have been better off if you said: this deserves an investigation by the Pentagon. Rather than saying: nerve gas was used.

OLIVER: I think you should very carefully read the transcript and see it says "military sources tell us that nerve gas was used." We always are very careful to attribute it to sources. And, in fact, that's what they did tell us. Officers -- confidential officers told us -- confidential sources told us that this is what happened. And we have every reason to believe them.

PRESS: And that's got to be the last word. I'm sorry. April Oliver, thank you very, very much for joining us. Jack Smith, thank you. I know you've got a lot more to go. We're out of time. Bob Novak and I, we've got some time left for closing comments, coming up next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

NOVAK: Jack Smith is a highly respected broadcast journalist, but I've been around even longer than Jack Smith, and I think I have developed what we call in the business, a BS detector. When I watched this show originally I said, gee, that couldn't have happened. And if it did happen, they sure haven't proved it. I still believe, after listening to their impassioned and I think sincere defense, they didn't prove it happened. And you have to prove it.

PRESS: Bob, I think April and Jack are two of the best people around here, even though I never personally worked with them. Like you I didn't believe the story. Like you I still don't believe the story. I think it proves that even the best can screw up. And the skepticism going into a story like this I think is at one point along the line, in my view, became lacking. When you got the guy who is one of the chief people saying I am not confirming the story, that's what you say, there ought to be bells rings, there weren't.

NOVAK: OK.

PRESS: From the left -- you and I have to do better. From the left I am Bill Press. Good night for CROSSFIRE.

NOVAK: From the right, I am Robert Novak. Join us again next time for another edition of CROSSFIRE.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: July 6, 1998

92ND STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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The Independent (London)

July 6, 1998, Monday

SECTION: NEWS; Page 14

LENGTH: 508 words

HEADLINE: Producer hits back at CNN

BYLINE: Mary Dejevsky in Washington

BODY:

A CNN television producer dismissed last week over a broadcast report that US troops used nerve gas during the Vietnam war is fighting back, accusing senior executives of slandering her and caving in to pressure from military and political interests.

April Oliver, 36, an experienced television journalist, refused to resign after a respected media lawyer retained by CNN concluded there was insufficient evidence to support the charges made in the documentary, Valley of Death: Operation Tailwind.

Admitting the cable network's acute embarrassment, the chairman of the CNN News Group, Tom Johnson, issued a formal retraction and apology which the network broadcast repeatedly.

After her dismissal, Ms Oliver circulated media organisations with her version of events - a vigorous defence of her findings and methods that she had earlier sent to Richard Kaplan, the President of CNN America.

He is, coincidentally, the executive who conceived the CNN/Time collaboration. The controversial report was broadcast four weeks ago as the lead item in what was intended to be a pioneering joint venture with Time magazine.

In her four-page letter, Ms Oliver said she had witnessed "the destruction of a piece of journalism I remain proud of" and "endured public humiliation unparalleled in recent years".

She said she had warned her superiors in advance that the report was likely to be attacked and had identified the likely attackers. Ms Oliver's immediate superior, Jack Smith, was dismissed after refusing to resign. The senior producer of the NewsStand programme, Pamela Hill, resigned, and Peter Arnett, one of CNN's star correspondents who fronted the report, was reprimanded.

Ms Oliver said her source-book, containing notes of more than 200 interviews, had gone "unchallenged" by senior executives, including Mr Kaplan, and she accused CNN of hoping to defuse the controversy "in the long-term interest of protecting CNN relationships with the military".

Ms Oliver and a team of researchers had spent the best part of a year researching the 18-minute report, which accused the US military of using sarin nerve gas in an operation intended to kill US defectors in Laos in 1970.

The claims immediately attracted fierce criticism from former military officials and from ex-servicemen, who objected that their honour had been unjustly impugned.

The chairman of the Joint chiefs of Staff at the time of the operation, Admiral John Moorer, who was quoted in the documentary, denied he had confirmed the use of sarin gas in that operation or any other, and demanded a retraction.

There was also a groundswell of criticism from editors and analysts inside CNN and Time magazine, which had published an article written jointly by Ms Oliver and Mr Arnett to coincide with the broadcast.

Outside consultant, Floyd Abrams, presented his conclusions late last week. His verdict was that, while he had no doubts about the sincerity of those involved, they were guilty of "journalistic overkill".

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: July 06, 1998

100TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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ABC NEWS

SHOW: ABC GOOD MORNING AMERICA SUNDAY (10:00 am ET)

JULY 5, 1998

Transcript # 98070505-j02

TYPE: INTERVIEW

SECTION: NEWS

LENGTH: 1100 words

HEADLINE: BEHIND THE CNN STORY

GUESTS: APRIL OLIVER

BYLINE: AARON BROWN

HIGHLIGHT:

CNN's APRIL OLIVER TALKS WITH GMA SUNDAY

BODY:

THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT. THIS COPY MAY NOT BE IN ITS FINAL FORM AND MAY BE UPDATED.

AARON BROWN, Host: Well, contrary to what some people might think, no reporter likes to become the story. It's a pretty uncomfortable position. And April Oliver has become the story in this discussion of the CNN and its retraction of her story on whether sarin gas, a nerve gas, was used against American deserters in Vietnam almost 30 years ago.

She joins us now from Washington, and we are delighted to have you here. I can't imagine a worse week for anybody than the one you've had, and we appreciate your coming in.

APRIL OLIVER, Former CNN Producer: Well, I'm glad to be here. I'm glad to try to set the record straight on this. It's been very hard, because CNN has muzzled

those of us that worked on the project for the past three weeks.

AARON BROWN: Let's talk about a number of things here, if we can. First of all, there are a number of specific criticisms, but the -- it seems to me the overall criticism, the overriding criticism is that you fell in love with the theory of the story, that the nerve gas was used and used against American defectors, and that having committed that journalistic sin of falling in love with the premise, you then discounted everything that disagreed with the premise and gave undue weight to anything, no matter how thin it was, that supported the premise.

APRIL OLIVER: No, the real story here is that CNN executives in Atlanta fell in love with their jobs. This is the anatomy of a corporate whitewash. They couldn't take the heat, they couldn't take the military establishment coming down on them. They were threatened with a boycott by veterans to their bottom line. They didn't want to take the controversy.

I had Rick Kaplan tell me on a conference call a week or so ago that, "This is not a journalism problem, this is a PR problem. And I don't want to go to congressional hearings with Colin Powell standing on one side of the room and our bunch of ragtag special operatives on the other."

AARON BROWN: Mr. Kaplan, on a CNN broadcast -- Rick Kaplan is the president of CNN USA -- said of your work, "That was sloppy journalism."

APRIL OLIVER: I am -- I'm really shocked and surprised at this, because we provided Rick Kaplan and other CNN executives with a 154-page briefing book two weeks prior to broadcast, in which all our sources were extensively laid out. In addition, there was a 34-page second called "Naysayers" laying out all the different decliners, negatives, skeptics that we had come across, not only that we had approached and offered interviews to, but those that we expected would come out swinging afterwards to hit this report.

I would really like to address this question of tilting of the report, because I think it's a very unfair allegation. We approached Henry Kissinger to appear on this report multiple times, four times. He would not come on. And he's been one of the most vocal critics of the report afterwards. We approached CIA directors Richard Helms to appear. He declined. He said he knew nothing about this particular incident. We approached the chief SOG commander at the time, John Sadler. He declined.

We had lots of people who are only too happy to criticize the report afterwards, but absolutely refused to come on to be on our program.

AARON BROWN: Let's talk, April, then, about some of the people who were. In the Floyd Abrams' report, he says that Admiral Thomas Moorer, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who was used in the piece a fair amount. never did, in fact, confirm the basic tenet of the piece, that sarin gas was used.

APRIL OLIVER: But that's not -- that's very interesting, because I -- six days before the broadcast, I went and had a very nice visit with the admiral, who I spent eight hours with over the course of six months. And he read every single word of that script down to the very last line. Now, Admiral Moore is a man of courage to come forward. He was the only officer who, frankly, had the guts to admit to poison gas, sarin gas, and the hunt to kill defectors. But he read

every...

AARON BROWN: Did he have first-hand knowledge of this?

APRIL OLIVER: He had after-the-fact knowledge of this. He is the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff -- he was the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. And this was a very large joint operation. It was the largest, deepest penetration into Laos by Marine forces, by Air Force forces, and by Army forces.

AARON BROWN: OK...

APRIL OLIVER: Yes, after the fact he had knowledge.

AARON BROWN: Couple of others. The -- I guess it's the ground commander of the operation says he told you, and I assume he's being -- speaking a little bit hyperbolically here, "a thousand times" that sarin gas wasn't used, but nevertheless you quote him in the piece as saying, "Well, it's possible." He says that was an answer to an entirely different question.

APRIL OLIVER: No, that is incorrect. We had three separate conversations with Captain McCarley. On our first cold call to the captain, he said it was very possibly nerve gas that was used. It was something like mustard gas, but without the burn.

AARON BROWN: And one more, if I can, and that's the gentleman who says he killed the two Americans, I guess, in the piece. When he wrote the book, he never discussed nerve gas. Shouldn't that at least have been in the piece?

APRIL OLIVER: We approached him on that on our very first interview with him. He wrote that book for an evangelical audience. That book is only a very little bit about that Operation Tailwind. He told us that the reason he left that out is, he didn't want to put all the -- every single little bit of gore into the book, because he wanted to keep his audience.

It was also a very different time in his life, remember. It's 1983. And to even mention a top-secret black operation was a violation of his secrecy pledge, and he feared for his life.

AARON BROWN: April, I got about 10 seconds. Do you stand by the story?

APRIL OLIVER: Absolutely. You know, no -- at this point in time, I have great respect for the courage of the veterans that stepped forward and put their lives on the line in order to come forward to talk about this.

AARON BROWN: April, thanks, April Oliver, very much for joining us this morning.

APRIL OLIVER: Thank you.

AARON BROWN: Good luck to you.

(Commercial Break)

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: July 5, 1998

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Copyright 1998 The San Diego Union-Tribune
The San Diego Union-Tribune

July 05, 1998, Sunday

SECTION: NEWS Pg. A-13

LENGTH: 426 words

HEADLINE: Fired producer accuses CNN of slander; Defends report on Vietnam nerve gas WASHINGTON

SOURCE: REUTERS

BODY:

WASHINGTON -- A CNN television producer fired after the network retracted a report about the use of nerve gas during the Vietnam War said yesterday she had been slandered and accused the network of backing down under pressure.

Producer April Oliver said she stood by her report and deserved a chance to answer the allegations against her.

Earlier this week Time magazine and CNN retracted the June 7 report, which said the U.S. military killed U.S. defectors during the Vietnam War by using deadly sarin nerve gas.

Cable News Network said an investigation had concluded that its report on the 1970 UT Tailwind operation in Laos "cannot be supported." Time magazine and CNN are owned by Time-Warner Inc. and jointly published the report. Time also issued a retraction.

Floyd Abrams, a prominent First Amendment lawyer and scholar who conducted an independent investigation of the report for CNN, said it was not balanced.

"They just did not give enough play to the other side," he told the network.

But Oliver said they retracted the report too soon.

"If we don't defend our own reporting, why should sources put their lives and reputations on the line to come forward to uphold or advance it?" she wrote in a letter to Rick Kaplan, president of CNN America. A copy of the letter was faxed to Reuters.

Oliver said she had predicted that the piece would be attacked.

She denied that people's comments were taken out of context in the report, titled "Valley of Death."

"If we made a factual error of any kind, we should correct that. I continue to be unaware of any factual error in the script. We did not lead the interviewees, we did not put words in their mouths, we did not set out with a sarin gas/defectors thesis."

She said the retraction did a disservice to those her team interviewed for the report.

"For all those who appeared on camera, it took great courage to step forward, knowing full well they would be ostracized and hounded by their peers."

Oliver also said some media critics had falsely accused her of making up a "work of fiction."

"The allegation is also an affront to the courage of sources who came forward, and are now enduring harassment and death threats for speaking out," she wrote.

Oliver could not be immediately reached for further comment.

"I do not object to airing criticism. That is healthy and a necessary part of any journalistic endeavor. I do object to being slandered on my own network as being a dishonest journalist, with no ability to respond," she concluded.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: July 10, 1998

114TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1998 The New York Times Company
The New York Times

July 4, 1998, Saturday, Late Edition - Final

SECTION: Section A; Page 8; Column 1; National Desk

LENGTH: 1143 words

HEADLINE: Producer of Retracted CNN Report Defends Story, but Critics Fault Her Style

BYLINE: By FELICITY BARRINGER

BODY:

Ever since she entered the television news business in the mid-1980's, April Oliver has impressed her colleagues as an extremely confident and dedicated journalist. She gathered and synthesized details quickly. Her brisk, articulate presentations inspired trust.

Now Ms. Oliver and her style are at the center of the latest in a series of news scandals -- CNN's retraction of its report that the United States used nerve gas in Laos in the Vietnam War as part of a secret mission to kill American defectors.

Floyd Abrams, the noted constitutional lawyer who investigated the affair for CNN, said overconfidence was a prime factor in a series of calamitous journalistic errors in the CNN report.

An article on the same incident appeared in Time magazine under the bylines of Ms. Oliver and the CNN correspondent Peter Arnett. Like CNN, its corporate cousin in Time Warner, Time retracted the report and apologized.

CNN reprimanded Mr. Arnett on Thursday and dismissed Ms. Oliver, 36, a graduate of Princeton University and the report's main producer, along with her immediate superior, the seasoned senior producer Jack Smith. Their report was broadcast on the premiere of the program "Newsstand: CNN and Time." But Ms. Oliver stands by her reporting, which also appeared in Time magazine, and blames her superiors for a lack of care in handling it. Both Ms. Oliver and Mr. Smith said they had pressed for an hourlong broadcast that could have captured more of the complexity than appeared in the blunt 18-minute version that was broadcast.

But Mr. Abrams and Ms. Oliver's colleagues said she might have been better served not by more time but by a less committed and dogged approach. When fundamental objections were raised within CNN in the final days before the broadcast on June 7, she provided such a spirited and detailed defense of the piece that even her most skeptical colleagues felt she must have had a strong foundation for her work.

And as late as Wednesday, as Mr. Abrams was finishing his report, which was released on Thursday, she sent a letter to Richard N. Kaplan, the president of CNN/US, saying that she welcomed the investigation but that "anyone attempting

to retrace my eight months of reporting in two weeks -- in this extraordinarily hostile environment -- will simply not be able to match my work."

That was typical, say those who worked with her. Long before last fall, when she started looking through 27-year-old manuals of military ordnance and making herself fluent in the old Vietnam-era military jargon, she moved smartly up the ladder of television production.

"I hired her on the strength of her experience and presentation of herself," said Mr. Smith. "She was one of the best reporters and the quickest reporters and the quickest writers that I ever worked with," Mr. Smith added. "I worked with Bill Mooney at The Chicago Daily News -- the fastest rewrite man in history, God rest his soul -- and she's almost as fast."

And Ms. Oliver's response to the Abrams report, which repudiates her work as "journalistic overkill," was a passionate defense of what she and Mr. Smith still believed.

"There were strong interests out there who wanted to discredit this report," she said in an interview yesterday. "The clear tactic was to kill the messenger -- me. They're portraying me as the producer from hell who takes special forces veterans and pushes them against the wall and makes them say things they don't mean."

The decision to limit the report to 18 minutes was made by the show's senior executive producer, Pamela Hill, who resigned on Thursday, saying she agreed with Mr. Abrams's conclusions.

"It would have been great to put a lot of things in," Ms. Oliver said yesterday. "But there was a time issue. You can overload your audience with detail. There are two main points here. Nerve gas and defectors. To put in all these little details -- maybe this person was a Russian not an American, maybe it was a C.I.A. coverup -- you can overload the audience. There are a lot of maybes in this."

"We felt that we had hard confirmation from multiple sources, some of whom had read the script. So getting into the various potential cover stories could possibly be confusing to the audience."

About five days before the broadcast, she gave detailed and courteous responses to a colleague, CNN's Pentagon correspondent, Jamie McIntyre, and his producer, Chris Plante, who had challenged the report and pointed out that no one quoted on camera directly supported the report's central conclusions about nerve gas.

Ms. Oliver responded, and still vigorously contends, that in the following exchange, Adm. Thomas Moorer, 87, a former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had confirmed the use of nerve gas -- variously code-named CBU-15 and G.B. -- during the mission Operation Tailwind in 1970.

The exchange, as broadcast, began with Ms. Oliver saying:

"Isn't it fair to say that Tailwind proved that CBU-15, G.B., is an effective weapon?"

Admiral Moorer responded: "Yes, I think -- but I think that was already known, otherwise it would never have been manufactured."

Mr. Abrams concluded that Admiral Moorer was a questionable source, partly because his answers were often given in response to hypothetical questions.

In the final days before the broadcast, Ms. Oliver and Mr. Smith said, her 156-page briefing book, which contained 35 pages of information from those she called "naysayers," or witnesses denying the allegation, was sent to the network's top executives in Atlanta.

The rough cut of the broadcast at that time included a 10-second clip from Art Bishop, a pilot, saying that he had been told his plane was loaded with tear gas. But according to Ms. Oliver, Mr. Smith and Ms. Hill, after various superiors requested additional material that gave a historical context for the events of 1970 and added an interview with an expert in chemical warfare, Ms. Hill had cut Mr. Bishop's denial to a glancing reference. The denial did not appear in the Time version.

And Ms. Oliver said that she never believed that Robert Van Buskirk, a crucial source, who had been a lieutenant in the commando unit in Laos and told CNN he had called in a gas attack to save his men, had experienced repressed memory syndrome as he later told other reporters.

Mr. Kaplan, on a program called "Insight," which is seen on CNN's foreign outlets but not in the United States, said yesterday of Ms. Oliver and Mr. Smith, "I think that what they did was fall in love with their reporting and come to believe their reporting despite what they might have been learning."

"A lot of major information was left out of the piece, and while they may have done it because, out of good faith on their part, they believed they were doing the right thing, the fact is it doesn't stand up journalistically."

GRAPHIC: Photo: April Oliver, the journalist at the center of the CNN retraction. (1995)

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: July 4, 1998

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CNN

SHOW: CNN TALKBACK LIVE 15:00 pm ET

June 8, 1998; Monday 3:00 pm Eastern Time

Transcript # 98060800V14

TYPE: SHOW

SECTION: News; International

LENGTH: 7249 words

HEADLINE: Operation Tailwind: Did the U.S. use Nerve Gas on Defectors During
the Vietnam War?

GUESTS: Robert Van Buskirk Adrian Cronauer, Lucian Truscott, Thomas Blanton,
William Daly

BYLINE: Miles O'Brien, Peter Arnett

HIGHLIGHT:

A look at Operation Tailwind and whether the U.S. government usef nerve gas on
suspected defectors during the Vietnam War.

BODY:

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UPDATED.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

ROBERT VAN BUSKIRK, TAILWIND VETERAN: It was pretty well understand that if
you came across a defector and could prove it to yourself beyond a reasonable
doubt, do it. Under any circumstance, kill them. It wasn't about bringing them
back. It was to kill them.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MILES O'BRIEN, HOST: Did the U.S. use nerve gas on suspected defectors during
the Vietnam War? Ask correspondent Peter Arnett about his investigation into a
secret mission into Laos, and get ready to talk back.

Hello, everybody. Welcome to CNN TALKBACK LIVE. I'm Miles O'Brien. Do you
have a need to know? Should government operations be an open book even when it

CNN TALKBACK LIVE, June 8, 1998

comes to war? Last night, "CNN & TIME NEWSSTAND" opened some old wounds from the Vietnam War. A report on the suspected use of sarin, nerve gas, during a secret campaign into Laos has Defense Secretary William Cohen demanding an inquiry today. Mr. Cohen is expected to hold a news conference as we speak on gender training in the military. CNN's Jamie McIntyre will be asking for reaction to the CNN story. We'll go to that as soon as it happens for you.

Right now, let's talk about Operation Tailwind with the man who broke the story, Peter Arnett. Peter, good to have you on the program.

PETER ARNETT, CNN SENIOR CORRESPONDENT: Thank you, Miles. A pleasure to be back.

O'BRIEN: Now, Peter, I know you spent an awful lot of time in Vietnam covering it as a wire service reporter. You know, if you'll excuse the term, did you ever catch wind of this story at any time prior to finding this out recently?

ARNETT: No. If I'd gotten wind of it in Vietnam, I think we would have followed it up. I'd like to point out at this point, Miles, that think of the names April Oliver, Jack Smith and Amy Cassada (ph). They did the back breaking work of interviewing over 200 people, including many who participated in that mission. They should be up here sitting with me, not to share the blame, but to share the acclaim of breaking such an important story.

O'BRIEN: Peter, as you step back from the story for a moment, I know it's difficult when you've been involved in an intense investigation for as long as eight months, but as you step back and sort of look at it as an observer and not necessarily as a journalist, how shocked are you by it?

ARNETT: I was shocked. I was shocked last year, Miles, when the first information started coming out about the extent of these SOG missions, these black operations that were in Laos. This was a very closely held secret. The men involved in these missions regarded themselves as very patriotic. They were determined. They believed they were in Laos to help win the war. Thirty years later, 30 years it took for the first information to come out in book form that CNN reported on live here. Since then, we've basically been turning over the rocks. We found that defectors were targeted, and we've also found, as you've seen by our report, that nerve gas was used in Laos, not once, but probably many times.

O'BRIEN: All right, Peter, a lot of questions for you from the audience. Let's go to Jane.

JANE: I just wondered if the story had been substantiated with any of the generals or leaders of that war.

ARNETT: We did have extensive interviews with Admiral Thomas Morris, who was chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the time that Operation Tailwind was actually -- went into effect. He has confirmed that nerve gas was used in Vietnam not infrequently. He also confirmed that defectors were a target of these special black operations in Laos.

We've been to other senior officials that either have been unwilling to comment, or they have gone along with what Admiral Morris said and said that, you know, he has the final word on this.

O'BRIEN: Yes, but there are some skeptics in the audience, Peter. I know you're not surprised about that. Steven is among them. Go ahead, Steven.

STEVEN: Yes. Were there actually any Americans actually identified as being victims?

ARNETT: That's a question you can ask Robert Van Buskirk. He'll be on the program later. He was in Tailwind. He was on our program. He was awarded a silver star for gallantry for that operation. He says that to his knowledge, to his certainty, that two of the men he killed in that operation in that village under very desperate circumstances were Americans. He didn't stop to check their dog tags. Other Americans were said to be killed. But again, desperate situation, under attack. The whole point at that time and place was to get out of their in a hurry. That's why the nerve gas was used for the second time, help get them out.

O'BRIEN: All right, Peter, on that note, let's bring one of the members of Operation Tailwind in. Robert Van Buskirk is on the line with us from Morganton, North Carolina. He's a former Green Beret. He was a part of this operation.

First of all, Mr. Van Buskirk, thanks for being with us on the program. I'm holding up a book which you wrote in 19-- I guess was '83. Is that right?

ROBERT VAN BUSKIRK, TAILWIND VETERAN: Yes, sir, Mr. O'Brien.

O'BRIEN: All right, it's called "Tailwind." And I was leafing through it right before the show, and one of the key points which is not -- Well, there are two key points. First of all, you make reference to the fact that gas was used on this mission, but it isn't specifically stated as nerve gas. Did you not know?

VAN BUSKIRK: I didn't know with completely certainty, Mr. O'Brien. I had an Air Force colonel just before the mission warn me to make sure I took my mask, that the stuff could kill us. My father was an Air Force colonel, was in Vietnam and served with me. He had warned me, as well as this other colonel who knew my dad. So I had some suspicions, but it really didn't matter to me. We had a mission to do. And when I wrote my book, I didn't put anything in it that I wasn't sure of.

My book is really a Christian testimony, and it's, you know, been put into prisons. Where I am today, I'm speaking to you from a prison where we're completing a prison program, a youth prison in Morganton. So, you know, this book wasn't really for the public. Ward Books (ph) published it, sold a few copies. But we distribute hundreds and thousands of copies for free to men because it is a testimony. And it really wasn't to expose or anything. It was just to tell the men in prison and the women how I got to where I am.

And so when I wrote it in '83, one of the reporters went to the Pentagon and asked about it, and they said it never happened; there was no such thing as Tailwind, and that it was a lie. I didn't care. I didn't write it to fuss with the Pentagon. I wrote it to tell the story of how God can change a young man's life.

O'BRIEN: All right, the other aspect about it, and this perhaps explains it. What you just said explains it. You did mention the fact that there were potential defectors as part of your targets there. To this day, at this day, do you feel confident that there might have been defectors in that village?

VAN BUSKIRK: Well, it's not a matter of might have been. I saw two Americans, as I said on the show. One was going into a spider hole, which is where they hide in the camp. I saw him only waist up 'cause he was going down. And I saw another one running across the camp. He had his boots. He wasn't shackled. He was healthy. My rug sack (ph) had been shot off me. You know, my legs were full of grenade fragments, but I could run, and I literally tried to catch him.

But we had been briefed all through our missions into Laos that if we could ever find a defector, that they were also an enemy, and that they were very valuable, and that they should be disposed of, because they were killing us. They were causing casualties with their own tactics. And so there was no doubt in my mind what they were.

But when I did my after action (ph) report, I only saw -- You know, I only told what I did and what I saw. People heard me on the radio. The pilots heard me. Two of my squad leaders heard me. Because I had no choice and I threw a white Foster's (ph) grenade into the tunnel, into the spider hole, and that, of course, killed him. And any good soldier, I did my after action report, and my colonel in Saigon sat me down and said, "Son, there's Russians in this war. They speak flawless English. These were more than likely Russians. We're not supposed to be in Laos and we're not supposed to be killing Russians. The best thing you can do is forget it."

I was a 26-year-old Green Beret officer, a career officer, and I followed my orders. And I did literally forget it. And it wasn't until April Oliver and Mike Marriott (ph) and his wife, Midge (ph), and other people on the team, Jack Smith, began to question me that this came out. And I think they heard some of my squad leaders remember that I said it on the radio: "I just had to kill two round eyes." That was our code name for Caucasians.

O'BRIEN: All right, Doug has a question, because those of us who remember Vietnam know that there were a lot of people who were, to say the least, ambivalent about the war and might have walked away from the war but not necessarily have been defectors. Go ahead, Doug.

DOUG: Yes, sir. I was just wondering, is it certain that the Americans in the camp were defectors rather than deserters or perhaps prisoners?

VAN BUSKIRK: Well, that's a good question, Doug. Understand this camp was a

military base camp. We had attacked it at first light. Our LZ (ph) was on the other side. We were almost beat before this. We were all wounded. We were just about out of ammunition. And we'd come into the camp quite by accident. My sergeant and I had seen two dogs, and we decided to follow the dogs, kill their owners, and then go to the LZ. The dogs took us to the camp. Had we gone to the LZ, we would have been wiped out, because there was an ambush waiting for us. We didn't even realize it. So once we got in the camp, the only way out was right through the middle. We did what we were trained to do. And Doug, we were sworn by our oath to defend our Constitution and our nation against all enemies foreign and domestic. And I think all of us had made up our minds, you know, what we would do in this situation.

I gave the soldier that I almost caught, I gave him every opportunity to surrender. I bent down at the spider hole. I broke orders. I said, "My name is Lieutenant Van Buskirk, special forces. I'll take you home." And I would have.

O'BRIEN: And that was against the orders. That's interesting.

VAN BUSKIRK: That was against the orders because I had no dog tags, no ID card. I had nothing to identify me with the United States. My tiger stripe uniforms were made not in the United States. Everything about me was sterile in the sense nothing to link me with my nation. And this was the rules of the game. But in a sense of fair play and as a man of character, I gave him the opportunity to

surrender because he was not armed. But he was not shackled, he was not handcuffed. He was healthy. He could run fast and strong. He outran me. I was in the prime of my life, and he was running for his life. But when I asked him, he said in perfect English with no accent -- and I'm a linguist. I can find an accent if it's there usually -- he said, "'F' you." But he said the whole word.

And at the same time, my radio man caught up with me in FAP, Ford (ph) Air Patrol overhead, was demanding I mark the middle of the camp, because they could hear all the fighting, and they wanted to know where the center was, where we were so they could work the outside. And he said, "Mark the center of the camp." And I was right at the hole, and I said, "No. 'F' you. I'm going to count to three and mark it." And I did. And I dropped the Foster's grenade in the hole so that the white smoke would go up through this canopy and the FAP's and the (INAUDIBLE) moving, the fast movers could see where we were and then work the perimeter.

O'BRIEN: All right, Robert, we need to take a break here right now.

VAN BUSKIRK: Yes, sir.

O'BRIEN: When we return, we're going to hear from David, who thinks that in the case of war in some cases, the end justifies the means. You have to do nasty things. And we'll also hear from a caller who doesn't believe this happened at all. Stay with us for more TALKBACK LIVE.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

ANNOUNCER: The Pentagon told "NEWSSTAND" there were only two known military defectors during the Vietnam War. A veteran of the so-called studies and operations group said the number was closer to 300.

O'BRIEN: Welcome back to TALKBACK LIVE. We're talking about a story which was broken by "CNN NEWSSTAND TIME" just last night: the possibility that the U.S. military used sarin, nerve gas, in 1970 in the jungles of Laos. And David has been listening. David can justify the use of that, right?

DAVID: I don't know if I can justify it, but I'm just not sure how surprised we should be. America didn't win the Revolutionary War by using typical war tactics. They weren't the tactics that the British used. We didn't colonize America without pushing Native Americans out of the country. And I don't think we should be anymore surprised if politicians and lawyers are keeping information private than if Michael Jordan leads the Bulls to another national championship.

O'BRIEN: Peter, I'm curious your reaction on this. You have an interesting perspective on this in that you covered Vietnam. You broke this story. You've also spent a lot of time in Baghdad. Doesn't the U.S., however, lose a little bit of its moral high ground when it asks the rest of the world not to use chemical or biological agents?

ARNETT: It certainly does, Miles. And the Vietnam War, we know, was bad enough. It was controversial. But at the time, there was no inkling that this weapon was used. President Nixon promised the no first use of any nerve agents or chemical agents in Vietnam. The fact that we have proved conclusively to ourselves that it was used indicates a, you know, a certainly a lack of communication between the presidency and the American public. This was, if not illegal, America hadn't signed the international agreement forbidding the use of it, certainly was an act of in a sense of betrayal of the national will in this direction and it's shocking.

We believe it should be revealed, if anything, just a cautionary tale, to current and future administrations that they should level with the American public when it comes to such weapons of mass destruction, which the world does condemn.

O'BRIEN: Now, Peter, you made a passing reference there to what treaties the U.S. might have been party to at that time. Tom has a question in that regard. Go ahead, Tom.

TOM: Yeah, that was my question. Were there any international treaties in effect at the time that outlawed this? Are there any now? Or what was the -- How does it relate to this incident?

ARNETT: There is a treaty now that the U.S. has signed. At the time, the U.S., you know, was not forbidden under an international agreement to use such weaponry. But, as I said, the president of the United States had promised no first use of such weaponry in the Vietnam War or any other locality.

O'BRIEN: All right, let's take a phone call right now. We invite you to join us on the telephone lines. That number will flash on your screen periodically. Charles joins us from Texas, and I'm told Charles has some Vietnam experience. Charles, go ahead.

CHARLES: Peter, shame on you. I normally like your reports, but I tell you, I believe you missed it on this one. In '70 and '71, I was an aviator flying over South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, doing airborne radio direction finding missions. And really there was no problem at all with defectors. I mean, they say there were two through the whole war, but I just saw where someone reported there were 300. But there wasn't a problem. I cannot see where anyone would launch a mission just to kill some defectors, because they were not broadcasting on radios like they were in World War II and so forth. It was just a non issue.

And your ground commander, the captain in your report last night, he denied on television that that was the purpose of the mission. And he also denied use of the gas. Now the pilot of one of the aircraft also said that they told him it was tear gas. And yet, you have said that you had many sources, and yet the two legitimate sources both denied.

O'BRIEN: All right, let's ask Robert here briefly before we get to you, Peter. I know you want to respond. But Robert, from what you saw, and you may or may not be an expert on this but I'm sure you had some training in this regard, from what you saw, did you see people who were affected by tear gas?

VAN BUSKIRK: No. The beginning, we thought so, but when you're climbing over bodies that are down to get in the helicopter, and they're so frantic they're getting in the helicopter with you and you're shooting them off the back ramp, it's gone beyond tear gas. There's a picture of me there with my collar buttoned up, my sleeves all the way down in this tropical climate in a bandana. The one guy that's on the program, Hagen, was in convulsions. He had snot running out of his nose. His eyes were dilated. I mean, the man was bent over. This wasn't tear gas that got him. I had to take another soldier named Plaksic (ph) and say, "Put a mask on him." And he put him in the second chopper. I understand Hagen's been quite sick ever since. And so, you know, I'm afraid it wasn't, because we were all trained in tear gas. And we all had diarrhea. We all had -- Everyone of us had diarrhea. We thought it was maybe dysentery. May have been. But when I saw what was on that battlefield in that elephant grass just as the last chopper lifted out, that wasn't the effects of tear gas.

O'BRIEN: All right, Peter, your turn to respond.

ARNETT: Yeah, well, I'll just respond to Charles. You know, we don't want to disparage the good name of the U.S. military. And it wasn't easy for us to come to the conclusion that this weapon was indeed used there. But the massive evidence pointed to it.

The fact that Lieutenant -- that the military people who went in had atropine, which is an antidote on their person. They had special gas masks against nerve gas. The fact that the symptoms that were described vividly by many of those participating, experts told us were from nerve gas.

The fact that in the defector range that while I was in Vietnam, it was not unusual when we went to operational headquarters of American units for them to say that they had traffic, on-the-ground traffic about operational -- as they

went into operations, voices coming in to confuse the helicopter pilots, confuse the men in the field, which they presumed could have been Americans who had been captured or who had defected, who were working with the other side.

Don't forget, 1970, desperate times. The U.S. military was in a state of collapse. Soldiers were fragging (ph) their officers. The SOG people went in there with a mission to try and route out one of the problems that they felt were defectors.

O'BRIEN: All right, let's go to Cindy, and Cindy will have a comment, and then we'll head to break. Go ahead, Cindy.

CINDY: Well, my main concern now if this is a true story is the MIA's and the families who have waited all these years to find out if those 15, 20 men that were left behind from the gas could be identified for those families.

O'BRIEN: All right, that's a question and perhaps a comment which we'll talk about in just a moment. Stay with us for a little more TALKBACK LIVE.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

ANNOUNCER: Sources say sarin was used in more than 20 missions to rescue downed pilots in Laos and North Vietnam.

O'BRIEN: Hello, everybody. Welcome back to TALKBACK LIVE. Could this story be even bigger than we think it might be? Author Lucian Truscott thinks so. He's the author of several books, including "Heart of War." His sixth novelist titled "Full Dress Gray." And he is scheduled -- That is scheduled to hit the stands this week, or next week, I should say.

Also joining us by phone is former Air Force broadcaster Adrian Cronauer, the man portrayed in the movie which you might have seen, "Good Morning, Vietnam." Adrian, let me begin with you. What do you think -- Cindy had a question right before the break about MIA's. Do you think the government should get involved here and try to determine one way or another that this could close some MIA cases?

ADRIAN CRONAUER, VIETNAM VETERAN: Well, it might be an idea. I'm not sure. The whole issue of MIA's and people still over there is still very clouded. There have been so many sightings of Americans. Whether they were defectors or MIA's is still a question that needs to be answered. But generally, if they were defectors, I don't think they would have been kept in prison camps, which is where MIA's are.

But in this particular case, these were people who were evidently running free on their own. They had no leg shackles or anything on them that would indicate their freedom was being curtailed. And they were running around helping the enemy.

I think there's a presumption there that they were probably defectors. And a defector in a military situation is one of the most dangerous things that troops can face, because he knows what our side knows and is able to counter it. He can provide, as somebody pointed out on the radio, confusing signals. There's a lot of harm that a defector can do. And on a battlefield, it is essentially a traitor. And we all know the battlefield punishment for treason.

O'BRIEN: And I suppose on the battlefield, there is a presumption of guilt in that situation when you see all that. Lucian, do you think that those soldiers in that Operation Tailwind made a correct assessment that they were dealing with people who were defectors?

LUCIAN TRUSCOTT, WEST POINT GRADUATE: I think they probably did. But I want to comment on what Peter had to say about the year that this happened. 1970 was an explosive year. This is an explosive story for two reasons. One because of the sarin gas. But the real story here is that there were defectors in Vietnam. I suspect that the mission was ordered to kill these guys because the command had no interest whatsoever in word getting out and back to the United States that American soldiers in opposition to the war, were actually defecting to the enemy. This is the biggest secret of this story and the most dangerous one to the government at that time.

If the anti-war movement in 1970 had gotten a hold of the fact that American soldiers in fairly large numbers were defecting to the enemy, that would have been a huge story, hugely important. It would have made the front pages of the "New York Times," been on the evening news. It would have driven Nixon crazy. It would have emboldened the anti-war movement. It would have changed the face of the politics of the war right then. And that's what's really extraordinary about this story. The fact that you guys got that there were 300 defectors, we don't even need to know how many there were. But Admiral Moore confirmed in the report last night both parts of the story, that sarin gas was used and that they did have operations against the defectors.

I think it also should be pointed out here that when a soldier defects, he becomes a traitor. This is a major crime against the UCMJ and one for which there's a punishment. And the punishment should come after a court-martial. They actually sent these guys out there to murder these young American boys who they presumed were defectors. And you have to ask yourself the question: Why? I think the answer is they were scared to death of that information getting back to the American public.

O'BRIEN: All right, and the UCMJ, the Uniform Code of Military Justice, for those who have not been in the military. Smith had a comment. Go ahead, Smith.

SMITH: We were talking about the difference in using nerve gas and regular conventional warfare. I don't believe that there's anything different in the situation. It was what they used to accomplish it. It doesn't matter. I mean, they were under attack. They used whatever means they had available to them. I don't understand why there's even a question here. Defectors or not, that's not the point.

O'BRIEN: Peter, how do you respond to that?

ARNETT: Well, there are moral standards even in war, and the U.S. had undertaken not to use these nerve agents or chemical weapons in a first use situation. So the U.S. was going against America's word not to engage in that sort of activity in war. As I said, even in war, there are standards that we observe. And in this case, in Vietnam, I think we've pretty much proved that these standards were broken by the Nixon administration.

TRUSCOTT: And it's interesting that the time that they chose to use nerve gas was actually against American defectors, against Americans. I mean, that gives you an idea how frightened they were of the fact that this information would get out.

And by the way, I happen to disagree that these defectors probably were a major threat to American units over there. If I were to guess, I would imagine that most of these guys were privates. They probably knew the name of their company commander and their platoon leader and how to fire a rifle. But they had no operational secrets. They had no knowledge of any plans of American units and what was going to be done with them over there. I think the reason that they were killed was for political reasons.

O'BRIEN: All right, Lucian, we do have to take a break here. We apologize for cutting you off. You will have an opportunity to talk more when we return. We do have to say goodbye right now to Peter Arnett, who's had a busy day, continues to have a busy day. And Robert Van Buskirk, we thank you as well for joining us on the telephone.

One program note. There will be more on Operation Tailwind and reaction to this story on CNN tonight at 10:00 Eastern and again at 10:00 Pacific. Hence that is why Peter is so busy. Now, after the break: Should the government be keeping all these secrets? Stay with us for more TALKBACK.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

O'BRIEN: Welcome back to TALKBACK LIVE. I'm Miles O'Brien. We're live at the atrium at CNN Center. And joining us now is Thomas Blanton. He is the executive director of the Independent National Security Archives. Also with us is security consultant William Daly. And Tom Blanton has spent an awful lot of time over the years working to get the secrets from the government. He's been going after secret documents. Most recently, he was able to pry away from documents about the Bay of Pigs invasion, which you might have read and heard about.

Tom, I'm curious. A situation like this, where the allegations are fairly strong here that the U.S. might have used nerve gas in Vietnam, at what point do you think the general public has a right to know about something like this?

THOMAS BLANTON, NATIONAL SECURITY ARCHIVE: It's been 28 years, Miles, and I think that's one of the biggest points about this story. You know, here we are 28 years later trying to dredge up memories from some folks like Admiral Moore, who's now quite old, and some veterans who were there at the time. There were lots of documents on these operations as they were produced. There were annual command histories for SOG, for example, but only two years ago, the Senate investigation of the POW, MIA issue declassified chunks, big chunks of the SOG histories.

I looked up the 1970 SOG history. Our Vietnam expert at the National Security Archives, John Prados (ph), pulled it out of his file. And there's a page and a half describing Operation Tailwind, all the to's and fro's, what kinds of helicopters, what kinds of planes, how many casualties, the back and forth of the fire fight. Not a single mention of either defectors as a target or

nerve gas being dropped. And at the very beginning of the description, it says, "Tailwind was part of a larger operation, CIA operation." But it doesn't say anything about purpose.

And if you go back to the front end of that volume, they have a little paragraph. I don't know if the camera can pick it up. That's one little paragraph about Operation Tailwind, the middle part of which is still completely deleted. It says B-1. That stands for the first exemption of the Freedom of Information Act on national security grounds. And I think from the context, you can assume that those couple of lines are about the purpose: Why was Tailwind launched? Why

were these people going into Laos? And somewhere at the Pentagon, there is a copy of this document probably still top secret is what it was classified as that would have two lines describing what this was about. And that could help move this story forward.

O'BRIEN: All right, we've got to move forward to William for a second. William, I've got to ask you a question. It seems to me that over the years, the government's secrecy has been a two-edged sword. It's protected covert operations, but in some cases, secret operations, which went well and were met with great success, and which ultimately led to the collapse of the Soviet Union were kept secret. And the government can't even tell the world about it. So in a way, shouldn't the government start telling its story somewhat?

WILLIAM DALY, SECURITY CONSULTANT: Well, first off, let me say by even talking about secrecy and items that the government classifies as secret, I want to separate it from that supporting. Sometimes it's connoted with supporting actions, whether true or not like this, or other events that come to the public eye, is that secrecy in the academic sense is important and has historically been important to our country. If we look back through any of our conflicts over a number of decades is that secrecy is important to safeguarding our information about troops. We've seen it become an important part of safeguarding nuclear weaponry, which has slowed proliferation. So secrecy in the academic sense is good. It's important, though, that secrecy doesn't become the veil by which conspiracies or illegal operations or other types of events are hidden. And I think...

O'BRIEN: And that is, of course, what many people think, is that the government uses its veil of secrecy, it's classifications, as a way of covering up any number of conspiracy theories, whether it's aliens and Roswell or what happened perhaps on the grassy knoll. So how do you go about giving the public just enough information to avoid them from having that skepticism turning into cynicism?

BLANTON: You have to balance if off, Miles. I think that's the real issue and what really hasn't happened in relation to Vietnam in part because the passions are still very close to the surface. This particular story is about two major areas of government secret operations which most Americans would agree should remain classified to some extent. And one them is special operations capacity, ability of the United States military to go rescue a hostage, for example, is implicated here.

Second is use of chemical weapons of any kind. That's some of the most secret information in the U.S. government because nobody wants, say, Khadafi or

a terrorist group to be able to use chemical weapons. So there is a good reason...

O'BRIEN: I have to interrupt you. I'm sorry, Tom, I have to interrupt you. We have to go to Defense Secretary William Cohen, who's making a statement at the Pentagon right now. Let's go to it and our Jamie McIntyre.

(BEGIN LIVE COVERAGE)

MILES O'BRIEN, HOST: We have to go to Defense Secretary William Cohen.
QUESTION: ... killing U.S. defectors in Laos.

WILLIAM COHEN, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE: Well, I have read the report. And I have found no evidence, at least this has been presented to me, that would validate that report. But it is a serious allegation, obviously, and is something that I have asked now the service secretaries and those acting in their place to conduct an investigation and to find out whatever information that could validate these charges.

At this point, I've seen no such information that would support that. But, you know, it is always possible. So we will continue to look at it, and I will follow up with the information that comes from the service secretaries.

QUESTION: How extensive will that investigation be? Will it be a full-fledged investigation, or will this be an informal inquiry?

COHEN: No, it will be an inquiry to see exactly what the basis of the charge: Is there a valid basis for it? I am not that familiar with the details of this particular matter, but I was advised, for example, that one of the key sources for the story itself had written a book back in 1982 or '83, and there was no mention at that time of the sarin gas. It may have been an oversight, it could have been edited out. It may not have been included. I just don't know the reasoning behind it. So I think what we have to do is go back. We'll have to talk to Admiral Moore, who has been quoted, other people have been quoted. I would like to have the benefit of that information directly coming from them to the services. And I can review that and perhaps even meet with those individuals as well.

QUESTION: Do you think it's possible that this happened?

COHEN: Anything is possible. I have seen no evidence that was substantiated. And there are a number of factors involved that would tend to mitigate or to argue against it in terms of the use of this. But anything is possible, and I wouldn't rule it in or out. I simply indicate I have no information presented to me that would corroborate that story.

QUESTION: One last follow-up question. If it turns out that this report is true, would it constitute a war crime that the United States had used nerve gas?

COHEN: I don't know if it would constitute a war crime. I do know that it would be in violation of President Nixon's declaration that the United States would not be the first to use either a chemical or a biological agent in the field as such. That was the policy that he had articulated. And so it would certainly be a violation of that. In terms of whether it constitutes a war

crime, I'm not in a position to make that judgment yet.

O'BRIEN: As the subject shifts to Kosovo, we return back to TALKBACK LIVE.

(END LIVE COVERAGE)

It's time for us to take a brief break. When we come back, a lot of comments from the audience about secrets: When are secrets appropriate? When are they not? When do secrets lead to cynicism? And does that undermine democracy? Stay with us for more TALKBACK LIVE.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

ANNOUNCER: CNN submitted a Freedom of Information Act request on Operation Tailwind to the Pentagon seven months ago but has gotten no response. Overall, 700,000 to one million requests are made each year.

O'BRIEN: Seven hundred thousand to a million requests each year. That makes for some busy file clerks, Tom. I guess that's your fault, isn't it?

BLANTON: Well, partly my fault. I like to look at it as a good jobs creation program. You think about the things the federal government hires people to do, I'd much rather have them hired to release documents to the public than just about any other function.

O'BRIEN: All right, Lucian, you've been sitting quiet for a little while. I know you want to talk about the difference between what are political secrets and what are national security secrets. Try to edify us on that, will you?

TRUSCOTT: I think that that point ought to be made here is that, you know, in this story, we've got both. We've got a national security secret concerning sarin gas. But it was a political secret that there were so many defectors over there. And just as it was a political secret back then that there was major heroin abuse in the Army, that there was racial problems in the Army, that there was a fraggings of officers and everything else that was going on over there, the Army was virtually falling apart in Vietnam at that time. And this was a political secret that they tried to keep, and in this case have succeeded in keeping for 28 years.

O'BRIEN: Adrian?

CRONAUER: Yes.

O'BRIEN: Go ahead.

CRONAUER: Well, I wanted to talk about the whole idea of censorship, because in any military situation, there are two different kinds of reasons for censorship. One is that there are legitimate things you can't put on the air regarding ongoing military operations. Troop movements, for example. But there were a lot of subtler things than that in Vietnam.

But there was also what I thought of as the bureaucratic factor. You had

young relatively junior officers who had to make decisions, and they knew that their neck was on the line. And in situations like

that, it didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that the best course of action was, in the words of Nancy Reagan, "Just say no," which is what they did constantly.

Now, regardless of what the reason was, that was then. And there might have been legitimate strategical reasons for not having information put out then. The question is: Are there reasons still remaining now? And the only real legitimate reason I can think of for continuing classification now in stories such as this is that we would perhaps be judging actions then by today's

standards rather than by the standards that were applied then, specifically something like sarin gas.

Peter awhile ago referred to it as a means of mass destruction, a weapon of mass destruction. No. An atomic bomb is a weapon of mass destruction. Poison gas, terrible though it may be, is extremely effective though it may be, is not necessarily, unless applied in mass quantities, not a method of mass destruction.

But we say these things because it is an unknown quantity. We haven't used it regularly. And therefore, people are a little afraid. No, they're a lot afraid of it.

O'BRIEN: All right, let's go to Christine, who has a comment about secrets.

CHRISTINE: My comment was just that I think people looking back, you know, 28 years, something that happened a long time ago, it's very easy for all of us to criticize. But the problem with such secrets is when the Secretary of Defense comes on to television and tries to skirmish the issue and circumvent the issue and not really face it head on. Where I think people would be a lot more understanding of something that happens a long time ago if the government would just stand up, admit it, and investigate it, instead of trying to circumvent the issue.

O'BRIEN: William, where have we heard that before? If they just stand up and admit it, and we can move on. What do you think, William?

DALY: Exactly. I mean, we hear that all the time in the media today. And I think it's important to keep in mind -- Earlier, you mentioned about the numbers of requests that you have through the Freedom of Information Act, and certainly, it's quite staggering. We have to keep in mind that the Freedom of Information Act was developed really to help the American public put a little check and balance on the system to make inquiries.

Now, earlier, we saw that there was some parts of the document deleted. And that's quite common where particular references to individuals or information that may still be classified is obliterated. It's not to say though that that's the first pass. People have to realize that you can also go back, ask for a revisit of those documents, and a judge will be able to sit and make a determination whether or not the agency's ruling on whether that should be included or not should actually be included. And a number of times, it is over

and then the information is released.

But we also have to keep in mind that sometimes information that comes out years later, even though, you know, it's 28 years later, sometimes -- In fact, today, I would probably say there's some things going back to Korea and beyond that still may be classified regarding techniques of operations, about espionage activities, people who were cooperating. And some of the stuff still needs to be secret. It doesn't mean that because it's a certain period of time that all of a sudden that falls off the time line and we don't have to be concerned about it. So this is a whole issue of checks and balances. It's not an easy -- This is not a science. It becomes almost sometimes more of an art form how the things are classified and maintain to be classified.

O'BRIEN: And Neil here has a what if question for us, which is kind of interesting. Go ahead, Neil.

NEIL: Well, what if we had won the Vietnam War? I think these things wouldn't have been such dark secrets. Since we lost, since the Pentagon lost the Vietnam War despite massive power, massive technological advantage, and despite using extreme measures like nerve gas and carpet bombing, the Pentagon still lost. So they're extremely embarrassed, I think, and ashamed. And that's why there's these dark secrets.

O'BRIEN: Lucian, that goes back to your point about the political secret and a national security secret.

TRUSCOTT: He's exactly right. And that's why this story is so explosive. It's because we lost the war, and it's because what was going on back then was being kept secret. And the effect of this on the military during the war and its ineffectiveness was such a big secret, the heroin abuse, all of the different problems. And now we learn that there were defectors this many years later. That's why it's so sensitive, and that's why it's such a raw nerve. It's because we lost that war.

O'BRIEN: All right, let's go to Debbie.

BLANTON: I disagree a little bit.

O'BRIEN: Go ahead briefly.

BLANTON: The problem is not whether we win or lose wars, is that our government secrecy system, the default is set on secrecy. So that a colleague of ours, Steve Athrabet (ph), asked for the oldest classified document in American files, they found one from World War I. Now we didn't lose that war, but the system still kept that kind of information secret for 70, 80 years. And that's part of the biggest problem we face on government secrecy is that the bureaucratic instinct is to keep it hidden no matter what, and especially in the sensitive national security area.

O'BRIEN: Let's go to Debbie.

CRONAUER: That's precisely what I was saying before.

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O'BRIEN: OK, go ahead briefly.

CRONAUER: I agree completely. That's exactly what I was saying before. Censorship becomes a self-perpetuating phenomenon.

O'BRIEN: All right, Debbie, briefly, go.

DEBBIE: I just think that the decade of the '60s lends itself to people beginning to question the government.

O'BRIEN: All right, that's the roots of it all, Debbie. Thank you very much. We thank all of our guests for being with us on the program. We are out of time. Thanks to all of you in the audience. Thanks to you at home as well. We'll see you again tomorrow for another edition of TALKBACK LIVE.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: June 8, 1998

INTERVIEW OF DR. FREDERICK R. SIDELL
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US ARMY MEDICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF CHEMICAL DEFENSE
JULY 15, 20, 1998

Dr. Sidell explained that he is the former Chief of the Casualty Care Office, U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense, located at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. He is now a consultant. He has an MD degree from New York University, with a specialty in internal medicine. He has published articles and co-authored books on chemical warfare agents. His primary job has been to work on chemical agents and antidotes thereto for the last 30 years. He was on a special team that went to Tokyo after the release of Sarin gas in the subway there in 1995.

Sarin was developed in 1938 by a German named Schrader, who was developing insecticides. It is a clear, colorless liquid that evaporates at about the same rate as water and not as fast as gasoline. Sarin belongs to a class of nerve agents called organophosphates. These compounds and their symbols include Tabun (GA), Sarin (GB), Soman (GD), and VX. They are similar in chemical structure to insecticides. Sarin is more volatile than other nerve agents are—it evaporates at a higher rate, particularly compared to Tabun and VX. For this reason, it is considered a nonpersistent agent.

Nerve agents like Sarin are extremely toxic to humans. They can be absorbed through the skin, but the effects are most immediate and pronounced when the substance is inhaled. Sarin works by inhibiting acetylcholinesterase, an enzyme released by the nervous system. In the human body, organs are controlled by the nervous system. The nervous system releases a chemical or neurotransmitter that stimulates the organs, glands and muscles. That neurotransmitter enzyme is acetylcholine. In order to avoid continuous stimulation, neurotransmitter acetylcholine is broken down by another enzyme, acetylcholinesterase. Nerve agents work by blocking the activity of acetylcholinesterase so that this chemical break down does not occur, acetylcholine builds up, and the muscle or gland keeps contracting or secreting. As a result, hyperactivity in the organs and muscles, including the muscles in the airways and in the gastrointestinal tract, occurs upon exposure to nerve agents.

If Sarin vapor comes into contact with a person's face, it causes miosis—constriction of the pupils in the eyes and redness. When the eyes are affected, nausea and vomiting occur as a reflex action. Salivation would occur in the mouth, and a runny nose or rhinorrhea would also result. Upon inhalation, the airways would constrict, and shortness of breath would ensue.

Human skin is a good protectant against Sarin and resists vapor. If you put on a gas mask and stood naked while exposed to Sarin vapor, you could withstand 5 to 10 times the amount of exposure that you could withstand if you inhaled it.

The best protection against inhalation of Sarin is a gas mask. If the concern is exposure to the liquid on the skin, the best precaution is a rubber suit or "mop suit," and they are available commercially.

In terms of ability to cause human fatalities, 100 milligrams of Sarin per cubic meter would kill 50 percent of people who inhaled that concentration for one minute. If liquid was placed directly on the skin, 1.5-1.7 milliliters would be fatal. This amount equates roughly to one third of a teaspoonful. If vapor is inhaled, effects occur in seconds to minutes. If liquid exposure occurs, effects occur in minutes to hours. If exposed to high enough concentrations, unconsciousness may result in seconds, convulsions in minutes and death in as few as 10 minutes. Sarin may be employed as an effective lethal weapon. In weapons, Sarin is in liquid form, and detonation tends to cause the vaporization and dispersion of the liquid.

The best antidote for Sarin consists of a combination of two substances—atropine and pralidoxime. The Swedes have developed an autoinjector that is very effective, although the US has a system that is superior. Each soldier is supposed to carry three sets of autoinjectors. The antidote essentially works by blocking the acetylcholine from reaching the organs.

The compounds CS and CN are classified as riot control agents. Although similar in effect, they are different compounds. It takes less CS to cause reactions in humans than it would take if exposed to CN.

The effects of Sarin exposure on humans are different than those of CS or CN. Riot control agents cause burning eyes, red eyes, tearing, and may cause the eyes to close. Nerve agents do not cause burning, although they may cause tearing. Sarin would cause miosis or contraction of the pupil, which would last for days or even weeks. Riot control agents cause the nose to burn and a runny nose (rhinorrhea). Sarin does not cause a burning sensation in the nose, although it would cause a runny nose. Riot control agents also cause a burning in the mouth area and salivation. Coughing may occur. Sarin exposure causes excessive salivation but not a burning sensation. Sarin exposure also causes secretions from the airways and extreme shortness of breath. If Sarin is inhaled directly, unconsciousness may result in seconds. Riot control agents do not cause loss of consciousness. Riot control agents cause a burning sensation on exposed skin; Sarin does not. If a sufficient concentration of Sarin is inhaled, the person becomes unconscious, then goes into convulsions and twitching, and then becomes flaccid. With riot control agent, convulsions are not generally experienced, although retching from inhalation of the tear gas is not uncommon.

Medically, there are no lingering effects commonly associated with exposure to nerve agents. In this country, at least one thousand people have been exposed to non-fatal doses of nerve agents, either deliberately or accidentally, and no long-term adverse effects have been noted. However, exposure to organophosphate insecticides has been known to cause nerve deficits within days or weeks of exposure, and those symptoms are known to continue over time.

If Sarin gas had been dropped on the forces of Operation Tailwind, the precise effect on the people on the ground would depend on a variety of factors, including the size of the weapon, whether the Sarin would be in liquid or vapor form, weather conditions (such as direction of the

wind), and whether people had protection such as gas masks. If those on the ground were unprotected and inhaled Sarin in sufficient quantity, it is unlikely that all would survive.

To his knowledge, we had no nerve agents in theater at the time of Operation Tailwind, nor did we have it weaponized in ordnance small enough to be used on a small engagement like that operation—it was all in large bombs.

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Education

1960-1964- Internship and Residency (Internal Medicine), Cleveland Metropolitan General Hospital, Cleveland, OH
1960 - MD, New York University School of Medicine, New York, NY
1956 - BS (Chemistry), Marietta College, Marietta, Ohio

Civilian Positions

1995 October - Retired from US government; chemical casualty consultant
1993-September 1995 - Chief, Chemical Casualty Care Office, USAMRICD
Late 1970s - September 1995 - Director, Medical Management of Chemical Casualties Course
1985-1991 - Director, Chemical Accident Rescue Team (Team was dissolved)
1989-1993 - Chemical Casualty Care Office, USAMRICD, APG, MD
1988-1989 - Chemical Casualty Task Area Branch, USAMRICD, APG, MD
1985-1988 - Plans, Operations, and Training Branch, USAMRICD, APG, MD
1979-1985 - CW Casualty Management Office, USAMRICD, APG, MD
1976-1979 - Chief, Clinical Resources Branch, Experimental Medicine Division, Biomedical Laboratory, APG, MD
1975-1976 - Chief, Medical Volunteer Office, Biomedical Laboratory, APG, MD
1974-1975 - Acting Chief, Clinical Research Department, Medical Research Laboratory, APG, MD
1968-1974 - Chief, Clinical Investigation Branch, Medical Research Lab, Edgewood Area, APG, MD
1966-1968 - Acting Chief, Clinical Research Department, Medical Research Laboratory, APG, MD

Military Positions

1964-1966 Captain, MC, USAR
1964-1966 Chief, Clinical Investigation Section, Clinical Research Department, Medical Research Division, CRDC, Edgewood Arsenal, MD. CPT, MC, U.S. Army

Boards and Committees

1987 Member AR 15-6 Environmental Hazard Board, APG
1965-1979 Member, Human Use Committee, USABML/MRL (dates approximate)

1970-1972 CRDL Equal Employment Opportunity Committee (first committee)

1979 Member, The Surgeon General's Investigative Team to Southeast Asia to investigate use of chemical agents against the H'Mong

1995 Member, U.S. medical team to Tokyo by Department of State by invitation of Japanese government after Tokyo subway nerve agent incident

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Presentations

Scientific presentations at ASPET meetings.

Panelist and presenter: Symposium on Stress and Drug Disposition, FASEB Montreal, Canada;
Symposium on Triage, Columbus, Ohio, 1985

Invited speaker at seminar at Amer. Lung Assoc./Amer. Thoracic Soc. meeting, May 1991

Presentations at international scientific meetings held in Herceg Novi, Yugoslavia; Stockholm, Sweden; and Cambridge, U.K.

Presentations to the Surgeon General, U.S. Army, and to U.S. Senate Subcommittee

Hundreds of presentations on management of chemical casualties, including many sessions open to community health care providers, e.g., Pine Bluff, Arkansas; Richmond, Kentucky

Invited speaker at opening plenary session of annual meeting, American Association Medical Toxicologists, Toronto, Canada, October 1991.

Speaker, DIA, Treaty Verification Courses

Other

Reviewer, Journal American Medical Association

Reviewer, Scientific American Medicine

Reviewer, Annals of Emergency Medicine

Professional Organizations

American Society of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics

American College of Clinical Pharmacology

Awards

Several USAMRL/USAMRICD Achievement Awards

Consortium of Federal Laboratories Award for Information Exchange

Meritorious Service Award, U. S. Army National Guard. 1990

Department of the Army Commander's Award for Civilian Service - November 1989

Department of the Army Achievement Medal--January 1990

USAMRICD Commander's Medal February 1993



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26 June 1998

STATEMENT

I, James Graves, discussed with CNN several operations I participated in while serving in Vietnam with Special Forces.

I did not participate in Operation "Tailwind" as an advanced Recon or in any other way during September 1970 in Laos.

SIGNED

WITNESS

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS SEVENTH AIR FORCE (PACAF)
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96307



Colonel Larry M. Killpack
Commander
8th Tactical Fighter Wing

8 OCT 1970

Dear Colonel Killpack

Recently I attended a briefing given General Abrams, COMUSMACV, on "Tailwind", an operation conducted between 11 and 14 September by a force under MACV direction. In support of this action, elements under the operational control of this command flew 76 tactical sorties and, in addition, provided forward air control. Unfortunately, classification prohibits further description of the operation.

The briefer had been a member of the element on the ground. He presented, in well documented terms, how his unit repeatedly engaged enemy forces, and how critical tactical air support was to the success of the action. In all, 173 enemy killed by tactical air were claimed, a figure which may be on the conservative side. Describing the air support as "magnificent", the briefer further stated the mission could not have been accomplished without the coordinated, accurate air support his forces received. I am attaching a copy of some excerpts from his presentation.

At the close of the briefing, General Abrams stated he "was convinced it was a valuable operation executed with great skill and a demonstration of tremendous courage."

The professionalism demonstrated by your crews in support of this important action was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Air Force. I have been informed that a special "well done" and "thank you" is due Major Edward B. Flora and the crew of MOODY 2.

I commend you and all the men of the 8th TFW who contributed to the achievements of "Tailwind".

Sincerely



L. D. CLAY, JR., General, USAF
Commander

1 Atch
Excerpts from
Briefing

EXCERPTS FROM BRIEFING

"The friendly lives saved cannot be reckoned, however, the inference is clear. Of the 136 men participating, three were killed, 50 wounded. Only five of the wounded required hospitalization."

"The 1st Platoon reported only 1 enemy confirmed killed, but estimated that 35 enemy were killed by Spectre aircraft which provided support throughout the night. Third section reported 30 enemy killed by air, in their segment of the perimeter, and the 2d section reported 2 enemy killed by air, and no enemy killed by ground actions. The Spectre aircraft was unable to read the signals from the companies transponders or mini-ponders. The pilot stated his equipment was old, and he adjusted his A/C fire continuously from the flashes of B-40 rockets, exploding hand grenades, and trip flares that the company reported to him. Throughout the night of D+1, 1st and 3rd platoon members could hear the enemy cry out, groan, moan, and other sounds of pain. They could hear many objects being dragged away within 5 meters of their positions. After the A/C would fire, they could hear the enemy run and bang into trees as they fled in panic; they could hear some cry out as they died. Shortly thereafter, they could hear the sound of heavy objects again being dragged away from their positions, then more enemy signals and incoming grenades. The company estimated the aircraft as having killed a minimum of 67 enemy throughout the night."

"The TAC Air was successful on the 1st enemy squad and killed approximately half of the other squad."

"TAC Air was directed throughout the areas where earlier contact had occurred. The enemy did not make contact with the element again until the following day."

"Due to the canopy thinning out, the base camp was marked with a white phosphorous grenade and TAC Air was brought to bear on the enemy soldiers fleeing to the front and the right flank. The enemy who had remained in the center of the base camp took up positions in huts which were assaulted and destroyed. The first section killed a confirmed 54 enemy in huts, bunkers and spider holes. Two of these were NVA Sr. Master Sergeants. The 2nd section killed 17 enemy on the left flank. TAC Air killed an estimated 25 fleeing enemy soldiers."

"We cannot say enough good things about the air support we received. They were magnificent. Without their 76 sorties our job would not have been possible."

Although not set forth in the formal presentation, comments from men on the ground attest to the accurate and effective delivery of CBU-55 "everytime it was brought in."

R

The Associated Press

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June 7, 1998, Sunday, AM cycle

SECTION: Washington Dateline

LENGTH: 875 words

HEADLINE: Report: U.S. used nerve gas used against defectors in Vietnam

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

The U.S. military used nerve gas on a mission to kill Americans who defected during the Vietnam War, CNN and Time Magazine said Sunday in a joint report.

The so-called Operation Tailwind was approved by the Nixon White House as well as the CIA, the report said, quoting as its main source retired Adm. Thomas Moorer, a Vietnam-era chief of naval operations and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Former military officials who participated in the operation in September 1970 said their job was to kill defectors from the U.S. military, but it was not known for sure whether the suspected defectors died during a preparatory nerve gas assault or a subsequent assault with conventional weapons carried out by Special Forces troops.

A companion story on the eight-month investigation in which 200 people were interviewed appears in the current edition of Time magazine, written jointly by a CNN producer and correspondent.

"It was pretty well understood that if you came across a defector, and could prove it to yourself beyond a reasonable doubt, do it, under any circumstance, kill them," said 1st Lt. Robert Van Buskirk, who was a platoon leader in the operation. "It wasn't about bringing them back. It was to kill them."

"We have no historical evidence to confirm we ever used nerve gas in Vietnam or mounted operations against defectors," Pentagon spokesman Jim Turner told the AP Sunday.

The reported use of nerve gas came after President Nixon pledged a "no first use" policy on nerve gas. The U.S. had already signed a treaty restricting chemical weapons but the Senate had not ratified it.

The nerve gas, sarin, is the same gas used three years ago in a deadly terrorist subway attack in Japan.

Several officers who served in Operation Tailwind told the premier episode of "NewsStand: CNN & Time" that the government liked to call the gas "incapacitating gas" or "knockout gas" -- but that its true makeup was widely known.

"Nerve gas, the government don't want it called that," said Mike Hagen, a platoon sergeant in Operation Tailwind. "They want to call it incapacitating agent or some other form but it was nerve gas."

The report said Moorer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1970, did not admit on camera that nerve gas was used, but confirmed off camera that it was.

"I would be willing to use any weapon and any tactic to save the lives of American soldiers," Moorer said on camera, adding that he had no figures on how often lethal gas was used during the war. "I never made a point of counting that up," he said. "I'm sure you can find out from those that have used them."

187-193

In the magazine version, Melvin Laird, secretary of defense at the time of Operation Tailwind, tells Time he has no specific recollection of nerve gas being used but "I do not dispute what Admiral Moorer has to say on this matter." Moorer is quoted in the magazine as saying the gas was "by and large available" for high-risk search-and-rescue missions and that "this is a much bigger operation than you realize."

The magazine also said Henry Kissinger, who was Nixon's national security adviser at the time, declined to comment on the nerve gas report.

The soldiers involved in the nerve gas operations were part of the Studies and Observations Group, or SOG, a small, elite unit of the Special Forces. CNN quoted John Singlaub, a former SOG commander, as saying it could be more important to the survival of U.S. Troops to kill defectors than enemy soldiers because the defectors' knowledge of communications and tactics "can be damaging."

Van Buskirk said the team attacked a village base camp in Laos after observing American men - believed to be defectors - among the people. He said he even threw a hand grenade down a hole to kill two American men who were fleeing.

"We basically destroyed everything there," Hagen said.

Van Buskirk described the scene as "a mess."

"It was just pieces of human beings," he said, adding that among the more than 100 bodies, soldiers saw more than a dozen Americans they believed to be defectors.

But the gas use didn't stop there, the news show reported.

Former military officials said the gas was used a second time to get the team out of the area after enemy troops arrived.

"They were told to put on their funny faces (gas masks) because war daddy said we are coming in with gas," said Capt. Eugene McCarley, who led Operation Tailwind but says he never considered the use of lethal gas.

McCarley also denies that Operation Tailwind's mission was to kill defectors. "We weren't looking for any village. We stumbled upon it by accident," he said.

One Tailwind veteran described seeing the enemy forces throwing up and in convulsions on the ground.

"I looked down into this valley. All I see is bodies," Van Buskirk said.

Veterans' activist Ted Sampley of Kinston, N.C. reacted with disbelief when contacted about the story late Sunday. He said he only remembers being warned of deserters fighting with enemy troops and told to kill those soldiers, if found.

"The United States did a lot of things. . . but the use of nerve gas over there, I find it really hard to believe," said Sampley, who did two tours of Vietnam, the last as a member of the Special Forces.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: June 8, 1998

LEVEL 1 - 11 OF 47 STORIES

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June 22, 1998, U.S. Edition

SECTION: NATIONAL AFFAIRS; The Military; Pg. 32

LENGTH: 1139 words

HEADLINE: What's the Truth About Tailwind?

BYLINE: BY EVAN THOMAS AND GREGORY L. VISTICA

HIGHLIGHT:

Questioning a report that the U.S. used sarin gas during Vietnam

BODY:

IT IS A SHOCKING TALE -- IF TRUE. IN September 1970, as the Vietnam War rages on, a team of 16 commandos is sent deep into Laos on a secret mission. They are ordered to find and kill U.S. defectors, fellow soldiers who have gone over to the communists. In a jungle village, scouts spot a dozen or so "round eyes" -- Westerners -- who are believed to be turn-coats. U.S. warplanes drop bombs containing lethal sarin gas, a nerve gas, killing some of the defectors, along with scores of civilians. The Air Force drops more poison gas the next day to help the commandos escape by helicopter.

But is the story true? The account, which appeared on CNN and in Time magazine last week, caused a stir in the Pentagon, which announced a full investigation. Sarin, the lethal gas used in the 1995 terrorist attack on a Tokyo subway that killed a dozen people, is banned by international law. The United States has threatened to go to war against Iraq to prevent the production of nerve gas and biochemical weapons. Use of sarin gas against civilians or soldiers would be a clear-cut war crime.

Reporting by NEWSWEEK, however, raises serious doubts about the most sensational allegations. The Army captain who led the raid, Eugene McCarley, told NEWSWEEK, "It's all lies." Several other officers and enlisted men involved in the mission, code-named Operation Tailwind, strongly disputed that they were ordered to kill defectors or that they ever saw any. (NEWSWEEK was able to reach seven of the eight soldiers who spoke on the record to CNN/Time as well as 26 others involved in or knowledgeable about the raid.) Gas was dropped to help the commandos escape a large North Vietnamese force, these men said, but it was nonlethal tear gas, not poisonous nerve gas. According to the CNN/Time story, Adm. Thomas Moorer, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, confirmed the use of sarin gas in the mission. But Moorer denied this to NEWSWEEK. Moorer, who is 86 and now lives in a "care-assisted" retirement home, said that he recalled hearing something about a mission in which gas was used, but he could not recall if it was sarin gas or tear gas.

Officers involved in Operation Tailwind scoffed at the suggestion that commandos would be ordered to kill defectors. "We'd try to bring them home, if we ever found any. We never did," said Lt. Pete Landon, one of the three

platoon leaders on the mission. The real purpose of Tailwind, according to Captain McCarley and several other officers briefed on the mission, as well as a declassified special-forces history obtained by NEWSWEEK, was to blow up a bridge and disrupt traffic on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The CIA needed the commandos to create a diversion to draw away North Vietnamese regulars who were threatening to overwhelm CIA-backed Hmong tribesmen in the Laotian highlands.

From the beginning of Operation Tailwind, the 16 special-forces commandos, along with some 140 Montagnard tribesmen hired to fight the communists, encountered stiff resistance. All the commandos were wounded, though none died. The CNN/Time story reported that 60 Montagnards were killed; official records put the death toll at three. On the fourth day, the American force came across a rear-guard base for a North Vietnamese unit. Lt. Robert Van Buskirk, a platoon leader, gave CNN/Time a dramatic account of what happened next. Entering the enemy base, Van Buskirk says he spotted two Caucasians. One was sliding down a "spider hole" into an underground tunnel. The other was running toward it. The lieutenant gave chase, but just missed the blond man as he slipped down the tunnel. Van Buskirk said he offered to take the man home. "F -- you," came the reply. "No, it's f -- you," answered Van Buskirk, as he dropped a grenade down the hole.

Van Buskirk repeated this story to NEWSWEEK. But, he said, he had forgotten it entirely for 24 years -- until he suddenly recalled the events during a five-hour interview with CNN producer April Oliver earlier this year. Van Buskirk told NEWSWEEK that he had repressed the memory on Easter Sunday 1974. At the time, Van Buskirk said, he was in a German prison on charges that he had sold weapons to a terrorist gang (the charges were later dropped). Van Buskirk, now a prison minister in North Carolina, said that until he had a vision of Christ on that Easter morning, he had been drinking heavily and was haunted by nightmares.

Two special-forces scouts, viewing the base from a distance of about two miles, told CNN they had seen "round eyes." One enlisted man, Sgt. Mike Hagen, says he saw a "blond guy from a distance." He thought the man might be a Russian adviser. But Van Buskirk did not mention killing defectors when he was debriefed after the mission. He says he was warned not to by a senior officer who is now dead. Other knowledgeable officers and officials dispute Van Buskirk's account. "I never heard anything about defectors, and I would have," said Hugh Tovar, the CIA station chief in Laos at the time.

Under attack, the men of Operation Tailwind had to be rescued by helicopter. U.S. planes dropped canisters of gas on the enemy. Van Buskirk and Hagen later suspected that the gas was lethal. Hagen says he is today numb below the knees and is seeking full disability payments. But other men told NEWSWEEK the gas was ordinary riot-control gas sometimes used on helicopter rescue missions to befog enemy gunners. Art Bishop, one of the two American pilots who bombed the enemy, wrote in his journal the next day that his payload was "CBU-30" -- tear gas. The allegation of sarin gas, he told NEWSWEEK, is a "lot of nonsense."

It is possible that the special forces used an "incapacitating agent" stronger than tear gas in Vietnam. Two commandos told NEWSWEEK they had been trained to operate in a kind of gas that was not lethal like sarin but powerful enough to cause vomiting and diarrhea. April Oliver, the CNN producer, has for the past eight months been investigating the alleged use of poison gas by

special forces in Vietnam. CNN vice president Pam Hill told NEWSWEEK that Oliver has "multiple confidential sources" to back up the story about the use of sarin gas. Oliver, together with correspondent Peter Arnett, wrote the piece that appeared in Time as part of a new TV magazine show called "NewsStand: CNN & Time." (The two news organizations are corporate partners.) When informed of the substance of this NEWSWEEK article, Arnett said, "It's a pretty factual account of one side of what's going on. It seems fair." Time staffers had minimal involvement in reporting the story. Says Time Managing Editor Walter Isaacson: "We welcome further debate and inquiry." A pentagon spokesman says no evidence has been found to confirm the story, but the investigation continues.

GRAPHIC: Pictures 1 and 2, Fog of war: Van Buskirk during Tailwind; now he says he recalls a buried memory of a nerve-gas attack; Picture 2, ORTEGA GAINES

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: June 22, 1998

INTERVIEWEES

During DoD's investigation of CNN/Time's allegations about Operation Tailwind, the following people were interviewed.

Civilian Personnel

The Honorable Melvin Laird, former Secretary of Defense
Dr. Frederick R. Sidell, former Chief, Casualty Care Office, USA
Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense

Joint Chiefs Of Staff

ADM Thomas H. Moorer, USN (Ret.), former Chairman, JCS
GEN John W. Vogt, USAF (Ret.), former Director, Joint Staff

United States Air Force

Munitions Maintenance Personnel of the 56th Special Operations Wing

CMSgt Donald P. Guy, USAF (Ret.)
Col Donald L. Knight, USAF (Ret.)
SMSgt James L. McCoy, USAF (Ret.)
Lt Col Paul C. Spencer, USAF (Ret.)
Lt Col Wilfred N. Turcotte, USAF (Ret.)

A-1 Skyraider Pilots of the 56th Special Operations Wing

Maj Arthur N. Bishop, USAF (Ret.)
Col Donald H. Feld, USAF (Ret.)
2d Lt Thomas K. Stump

Army Special Forces Rider with USAF Covey Forward Air Controllers

MSgt Lloyd O'Daniels, USA (Ret.)

Covey Forward Air Controllers of the 20th Tactical Air Support Squadron

Col George E. Boehmer, USAF (Ret.)
Maj Gary E. Green, USAF (Ret.)
Lt Col Warner McGraw, USAF (Ret.)

United States Army

Studies and Observations Group

MSG Morris N. Adair
SGT Michael E. Hagen
LTC Ernest Hayes, USA (Ret.)
LTC Jack Isler, USA (Ret.)
LTC Eugene McCarley, USA (Ret.)
SFC Denver G. Minton
COL Robert Pinkerton, USA (Ret.)
CPT Michael Rose, USA (Ret.)
COL John Sadler, USA (Ret.)
SGT Craig Schmidt
MG John Singlaub, USA (Ret.)
LTC Lawrence Trapp, USA (Ret.)
1LT Robert Van Buskirk

170th Assault Helicopter Company

WO1 William D. Watson

United States Navy

HML-367

1st Lt Joseph P. Driscoll

HMH-463

LtCol Arthur J. Picone, Jr., USMC (Ret.)